

Armed gang kills seven in Algeria

ALGIERS (AFP) — An armed group killed seven people, including five children, in an attack on a small settlement west of Algiers, Algerian security forces said in a statement Monday.

The victims — two women and five children — were killed overnight Sunday near the town of Tipaza, some 50 kilometres from the capital, the statement said.

Meanwhile, press reports said a water tower watchman was killed by suspected Islamists overnight Saturday at his post near Ain Defla, west of Algiers.

In a separate incident Sunday morning, a truck driver was injured when a bomb exploded in the western region of Saïda.

At the same time, a 25-year-old student and her mother were kidnapped by a suspected armed Islamist group at a fake road block.

Two newspapers also reported the arrest of two doctors in the eastern city of Constantine on charges of belonging to the outlawed Armed Islamic Group (GIA).

The violence erupted in Algeria in 1992 after the military-backed government cancelled the second round of elections an Islamist group was poised to win.

The government says that around 26,000 people have been killed since then while the U.S. State Department puts the toll at more than 70,000.

Outgoing U.S. ambassador says U.S.-Syrian relations improving

DAMASCUS (AFP) — U.S. Ambassador to Syria Christopher Ross, wrapping up his assignment here, said that relations between the two countries have improved in recent years, the Syrian official daily Al Baath reported Monday.

The newspaper quoted Mr. Ross as saying that relations have become clearer and disagreements between the countries have lessened at a ceremony Sunday marking the end of his mission.

The ceremony was attended by Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Suleiman Haddad.

Mr. Ross said the United States understood Syria's position concerning bilateral and regional questions, the newspaper reported, and the United States and Syria are also committed to working together for peace despite difficulties.

Mr. Ross is being replaced here by Ryan Crocker, who was U.S. ambassador to Lebanon in 1990 and to Kuwait in 1994.

Relations between the United States and Syria, often strained in the past, have grown relatively better since the start of the Israeli-Arab peace process in 1991.

U.S. President Bill Clinton decided in November to remove Syria and Lebanon from a list of countries the United States considers as playing a "major" role in the

production and trafficking of drugs.

But Syria remains on an annual U.S. State Department list as a country supporting terrorism.

Syria receives no economic aid from the United States and trade between the countries is modest.

In 1997, the United States exported \$180.5 million worth of industrial and oil equipment to Syria, and imported \$30 million worth of clothes and food products, according to the U.S. embassy here.

Two U.S. oil firms, ARCO and Marathon, are currently negotiating with the Syrian government for oil exploration contracts.

Israel recovers bodies of two airmen in crash

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's army said on Monday it had found the bodies of two air force officers whose helicopter crashed into the Mediterranean during a training flight.

The tail of the U.S.-made Cobra attack helicopter suddenly separated from the body on Sunday before both sections plunged into the sea, the army said. The bodies of the two officers were fished out of the water.

One of the two was Brigadier General Shmuel Eldar, who commanded the air force's Palmachim base. He was training a lieutenant of the coast of central Israel when their helicopter went down.

Turkey seeks to host Balkans intervention force

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey wants to see a multinational rapid intervention force for the troubled Balkans set up on its soil to deal with crisis situations, a top Turkish general said Monday.

Military officials and diplomats from the United States, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Slovenia held a meeting here with Turkish authorities on Ankara's proposal Monday.

Turkey's arch-rival Greece refused to take part in the meeting, a foreign ministry official said.

The creation of this multinational peacekeeping force for the Balkans, that we want to host, will be a milestone for security and stability in the whole region," General Cevik Bir, deputy chief of the Turkish general staff, told the meeting with visiting foreign teams.



STUDENTS RALLY IN ISTANBUL: A group of leftist students shout slogans and hold up banners Monday near Istanbul's 18th century Beyazit Mosque. The students were commemorating the anniversary of the killing of seven students at the entrance of Istanbul University in 1978 (Reuters photo)

Syria asks Turkey to improve ties by reconsidering military accord with Israel

DOHA (AFP) — Syria has called on Turkey to reconsider its military accord with Israel to improve Syrian-Turkish relations. Syria's foreign minister said on the sidelines of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting Monday.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa told reporters he had made the call during a meeting with his Turkish counterpart, Ismail Cem, Sunday night. He said

the meeting was "at the initiative of the Turkish side" to discuss bilateral relations.

"I repeated to the Turkish minister our rejection of the accord and stressed the necessity [for Ankara] to revise it," the Syrian minister said.

"We have asked for a revision of the agreement, because it is tied to the peace and security of the Middle East, and in order to be able to improve bilateral relations

in the interest of our two peoples," Mr. Sharaa added.

Islamic foreign ministers from the 55 members of the OIC have been meeting here since Sunday.

Syria has repeatedly criticised Turkey for establishing military cooperation with Israel in 1996, saying the accord is aimed against Damascus.

Turkish-Syrian relations, cold since September 1995, are also strained by disagree-

ments over Kurdish unrest in southern Turkey and water resources.

Turkey accuses Syria of supporting the Turkish Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), which has been in revolt against Ankara since 1984.

Syria, in turn, accuses Turkey of limiting the amount of water flowing down the Euphrates river, which originates in Turkish highlands and runs through Syria.

Turkish authorities start 'soothing' regimen for security forces

By John Ezard

TURKISH SECURITY chiefs have recently unveiled a four-point scheme to calm their notoriously headbanging riot police.

Point one is plastic instead of wooden truncheons. Point two is plastic rather than steel handcuffs. Point three is radio transceivers so that they can be ordered to stop hitting demonstrators.

But the most fiendish item in the plan is point four: Soothing Western classical music — "especially Mozart and Beethoven" — will be played to them as they wait

behind the scenes in riot coaches.

The aim is to stop them getting twitchy and paranoid. Ankara's assistant police chief, Kutay Celik, said: "The music will have a soothing effect on the brains of those who are not so politic."

Clashes with Islamists, trade unionists and Kurdish demonstrators have given crack anti-riot units — known until now as Steel Force — a somewhat impolite reputation.

Western human rights monitors have criticised Turkey's way of handling dissent. But the last straw came when

police began beating up their fellow civil servants.

"Extremist factions in the demonstrations tease the police and then escape," said Orhan Tung, councillor at the Turkish embassy in London. "Law-abiding civil servants who are demonstrating are the ones who get hit."

While Turks like Western as well as their own classical music, the initiative is expected to broaden the taste of some Steel Force members. The chart topper in Turkish cities last week was Turkish, who specialises in soft-drug music.

The government is also

aware of a potential hitch: the martial vigour of Turkish janissary (infantry) music has been a major influence on Western classics since the 18th century.

Composers who have used it include Haydn, Gluck and Bartok. Heady strains of it are present in Mozart's Die Entführung aus dem Serail and the finale of Beethoven's ninth symphony.

"We shall have to be careful what we play," Mr. Tung said. "Not Beethoven's Turkish March — and definitely no Wagner."

From the Guardian

Tehran's mayor to stand trial for alleged violations — newspaper

TEHRAN (AFP) — Tehran's flamboyant mayor, Gholam-Hossein Karbaschi, is to stand trial as part of a corruption scandal that has hit his municipality, a newspaper reported Monday.

Mr. Karbaschi, a moderate close to President Mohammad Khatami, "will be summoned to court as an accused" April 4, said Kayhan daily, which as a member of the hardline conservative press has waged a fierce campaign against the mayor.

The mayor has already been summoned to court five times in the past but only to answer questions linked to a wave of corruption charges hitting the city government.

A dozen city officials, including several close Karbaschi aides, have already been tried or are being investigated after a wave of arrests several months ago, following

the presidential elections in May which brought President Khatami to power.

The mayor has dismissed the corruption allegations as a political campaign waged against him by his conservative opponents.

But Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, a conservative cleric who heads the judiciary, has denied the charge and vowed to bring corrupt officials to justice, regardless of their rank.

But he said recently that there had been no grounds for the mayor's arrest, although he had allegedly misappropriated funds.

Other moderate officials have also questioned the campaign against the municipality and supported the mayor, who is seen as a capable administrator who changed the face of Tehran, an over-populated city once wrecked by mis-

management and neglect.

In a gesture of support for the mayor, former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani invited the mayor to accompany him during a recent trip to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Khatami himself indirectly backed the mayor in an address to the nation Saturday.

"We should accept mistakes from our managers. If we overreact to a mistake or violation and target their reputation, this will make our administrators overly conservative and timid," he said.

Mr. Karbaschi has been highly disliked by conservatives since he formed a moderate faction to challenge them in legislative elections two years ago. He further undermined rightwingers with his crucial contribution to the moderate Mr. Khatami's election.

Turkey wants better ties with Iraq — paper

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq's foreign ministry undersecretary is holding talks with Turkish officials in Ankara to improve ties between the two countries, an Iraqi newspaper said Monday.

"An Iraqi delegation headed by Saad Al Faisal has started at the beginning of this week contacts with the Turkish side to discuss bilateral ties," the weekly newspaper Nabdh Al Shabab (Pulse

of Youth) said.

The paper said Ankara had expressed a desire to improve ties between the two countries, which have been deteriorating over a number of issues.

"Turkey has stressed that it intended to raise the level of its diplomatic mission in Baghdad from a charge d'affaires to an ambassador," the paper said.

It said Turkey was launch-

ing an initiative to normalise ties between Iraq and its 1991 Gulf war foes Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as well as Iran.

Relations between Baghdad and Ankara have recently been at their worst since the Gulf war which drove Iraq's occupation troops out of Kuwait. Turkey allowed the U.S.-led multinational force against Iraq to use its territory as a base for air strikes on Iraq.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:10 Cartoon — C.R.O.
16:30 French programmes
18:00 Quiz Show — Small Talk
18:30 Drama — Border Town
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Educational Magazine — Tets Chereheurs
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Pride and Joy
20:00 What Would You Do?
20:30 Encounter
21:10 Drama — Acabolo Bay
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature Film — "Anna's War"
23:59 Metro Cafe
00:30 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:23 Fajr
05:40 Sunrise Doha
11:44 Dhuhur
15:09 Asr
17:48 Maghrib
19:05 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweibeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.

4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4634500
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 865897

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4634932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541

Church of Presentation, Sweibeh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757

The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679

The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to drop significantly, skies cloudy to partly cloudy, occasional rain, winds southwesterly to westerly active. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers, winds southerly active, and seas rough.

Amman 07/14
Aqaba 11/22
Deserts 09/16
Jordan Valley 10/20

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 17, Aqaba 28 Humidity readings: Amman 55 per cent, Aqaba 56 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY AMMAN:
Dr. Bassam Karadshah 4389200
Dr. Rami Mawazini 894788
Dr. Salwan Dubouzi 776731

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 866390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directo-

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 592109
The Islamic Ahi 5661317
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 836813 85626
Luzma 4630195
Khaldi Maternity 4644281/6
Akrieh Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 2667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdal 5666164/6

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
07:15 Sanaa (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20 Beirut (RJ)
08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:10 Brussels, Paris (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:30 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
19:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:20 Larnaca (RJ)
20:40 Damascus (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights

14:35 Istanbul (TK)
14:40 Munich (YP)
16:30 Rome (AZ)
18:30 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
20:00 Tel Aviv (LY)
20:10 Beirut (ME)
20:40 Cairo (MS)
22:30 London (BA)
23:35 Amsterdam (KL)
23:35 Larnaca (CY)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

07:45 Aqaba (RW)
09:05 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
09:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:20 Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:20 Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15 Aqaba (RW)
09:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
17:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55 Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 Aqaba (RW)

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MULKI OPENS TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE: Depntising for HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Minister of Trade, Industry and Supply Hani Mulki opens the First Italian-Jordanian Conference: Plastic Materials Technology and Environment. The conference was organised by the Higher Council of Science and Technology (HCST), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Italian Research Centre (Petra photo)

Rain forecast to replace duststorms

AMMAN (J.T.) — The khamasin conditions and duststorms which prevailed Monday in Jordan will recede Tuesday, giving way to humid weather and rain, the Department of Meteorology announced Monday.

A department official said a cold front will replace the dusty weather, resulting in lower temperatures. A high of 14° C and a low of 6° C are expected on Tuesday.

Thunderstorms are expected in the northern regions, gradually moving south, the official added.

Monday's duststorm made visibility poor, especially in the southern and eastern regions, but skies are expected to clear up completely on Tuesday due to the rain.

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for the Civil Aviation Authority Monday said that despite the sandstorm, Jordanian airports continued normal operations. However, there were some delays in departures due to some destination airports being temporarily closed because of poor visibility conditions.

Police arrest suspect in bank robbery

AMMAN (Petra) — The Amman Police Department Monday announced the arrest of a suspect who allegedly robbed the Jordan National Bank, Mahatta branch, in January and said the suspect made a confession.

Amman Police Department Director Hisham Ensour said the 23-year-old suspect, identified only as A.M.A., called at the bank on Jan. 21 with the ostensible purpose of opening an account. Instead, Brigadier Ensour said, the suspect drew a gun and ordered the two bank employees to hand over money they were preparing to place in the bank's safe.

The suspect got away with JD1,950, according to Brig. Ensour, who noted that the bank employees gave a description of the suspect to help the police.

The suspect was not apprehended until he took part in an aborted armed robbery on March 14, during which he and a 17-year-old suspect, identified as A.A.M., were surprised by an employee at a money exchange office downtown, the officer said.

The employees then chased the would-be robbers, but were able only to capture A.A.M., he added.

Eventually, the arrested suspect led the police to A.M.A., Brig. Ensour said.

Court sentences four journalists for slander

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Court of First Instance on Sunday sentenced four journalists working at Shihaan weekly to six months in jail each for an article and a caricature that the court found slanderous to Deputy Mohammad Ra'fat, whose visit to Israel last December stirred a controversy.

The four journalists said they will appeal the sentences.

According to Raja Talab, Shihaan's chief editor, Mr. Ra'fat accused him along with the paper's owner and publisher, Riyadh Hroub, reporter Riham Farra, and page editor Abdul Hadi Raji Majali with "slander for an article and a caricature picture published after his visit to the Israeli Knesset," he said.

Mr. Talab told the Jordan Times that the court had sentenced them in absentia.

The writer of the article, Ms. Farra, said: "We were all very surprised by the speed of the ruling, especially since we were not notified or even summoned. The case had been at the attorney general's office for only one and a half months. This is probably the fastest ruling in the history of the Jordanian judiciary."

She added that while she was accused of slander for her article, Mr. Majali was also held responsible for the caricature picture of the deputy on his page. Mr. Talab was tried as chief editor and Dr. Hroub as publisher of the paper.

Mohammad Ra'fat, an Islamist deputy representing the Palestinian refugee camp of Baqa'a, and his colleague Hammadeh Fara'neh, an independent (Amman Second District), had visited the Israeli Knesset and met with its speaker Dan Tichon and other Arab and Jewish Knesset members.

Both deputies defended their visit, saying it was private and was based on an invitation by Mr. Tichon.

The private visit was the first public encounter between Jordanian deputies and their Israeli counterparts since the signing of the October 1994 peace treaty between the two countries.

The visit drew a wide range of criticism in Jordan, especially in the refugee camps. Angry residents of the Baqa'a camp held a rally protesting the visit and demanding his dismissal from the House, while many Parliament members in the Kingdom also expressed indignation over the visit and demanded the "immediate dismissal" of the two deputies from the 80-member House.

The caricature on the paper's front page shows Deputy Ra'fat as a little child sitting on the lap of Deputy Fara'neh and asking him, "Daddy Hammadeh, when are you going to take me to the Israeli Knesset again?" Deputy Fara'neh answers him: "You missed your chance, son."

Mr. Talab said that the caricature was not personal, but rather, "it was political criticism, and far from any personal liability or slander."

Ms. Farra agreed with Mr. Talab's statement, saying that she considered the charges as a great offence to the freedom of the press. She added that the press has the right to express its view on any deputy, adding that "as Parliament serves as a monitor of the government's performance, the media exercises the role of monitor over both."

Asked to comment on the court ruling, Deputy Ra'fat said he was pleased and thanked "God for his blessings," but refused further elaboration.

Jordan issues appeal at OIC conference for protection of Jerusalem from Israeli occupation

DOHA (Petra) — Jordan has issued an appeal to the Islamic World to save the city of Jerusalem from Israeli occupation and has warned that the peace process is being jeopardised by Israel's policies in the Holy City and Palestine.

Jordan's call was made in an address by Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi to the meeting of foreign ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Doha.

"Arab Jerusalem and its Islamic holy places are falling under the yoke of Israeli occupation, but its people are steadfast in their struggle against the Israeli drive to obliterate the Arab and Islamic character of the city," said the minister.

"Jerusalem deserves the full attention of and protection by the OIC, which came into being three decades ago in response to the burning of Al Aqsa Mosque at the hands of extremist Jews," Dr. Abbadi said.

"The Palestine problem is the crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which can end with the recognition of the Palestinian people's rights, their liberation from occupation, and the establishment of an independent state on their national soil in Palestine," he added.

"Jordan, which seeks a just and comprehensive peace, regrets to see the peace process collapsing due to Israel's illegal and arbitrary practices, its annexation of Arab land, and the building of Jewish settlements on Arab territory."

Dr. Abbadi referred to HRH Crown Prince Hassan's call for the OIC member nations to establish an Islamic centre for settling disputes among Muslim countries and his call for an international zakat institution to help the poor.

Islamic nations are duty bound to pool their efforts and resources and help end their conflicts, he added.

Dr. Abbadi referred to the Iraq question and Jordan's efforts to prevent a military strike, and said Muslim nations have a duty to work for reconciliation among their members, including Iraq, in preparation for the lifting of sanctions.

Arab and Muslim nations should work towards ensuring a complete ban on mass destruction weapons in their regions, the minister said.

Pharmacists' association election results cancelled

By Odeh Odeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Supreme Court has cancelled the results of last April's Jordan Pharmacists' Association (JPA) general assembly elections and declared them null and void.

The court passed the verdict after studying a case filed by five pharmacists who charged that the elections were not legal.

In the elections, which took place on April 11, 1997, Abdul Rahim Issa won the JPA presidency, and a nine-member board was chosen.

But according to the court's verdict, 177 voting members paid their dues with post-dated cheques, while 52 submitted cheques which later bounced.

The court said that since JPA law demands that voters must have paid their dues, the results of the elections were considered null and void.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Care on Monday said it had not yet formally received the verdict from the court, and Adnan Abbas, the ministry's secretary general, said the ministry plans to seek the advice and counsel of the legislation bureau at the Prime Ministry to deal with the results of the court's ruling and the ensuing situation.

He said that the bureau should offer its interpretation of the verdict and the steps to be taken to deal with the new situation, including possibly holding new elections.

Jordanian pharmacists said that since the board elected for the 1997-1999 period can no longer function, a committee chaired by the minister of health should take over until new JPA elections have been arranged.

For his part, Mr. Issa said the board will be dissolved once it has been formally informed of the court's decision.

Mr. Issa and the board members have expressed their desire to run for new elections, if and when they take place.

Local firms win contracts for water projects

AMMAN (Petra) — Three local firms Monday won contracts to carry out water-related projects in Amman, Wadi Musa, and a number of towns in southern Jordan.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin, who signed the contracts with the general managers of the three firms, said the first agreement entails restructuring the networks in the Amman districts of Jofeh, Taj, Ashrafieh, Naser, Nuzha, Tabarbour and the Citadel area.

The work on this project entails laying 51 kilometres of pipes and the construction of five main water storage tanks, according to the minister.

The first phase of the project, which involves preparing designs, should be completed within 10 months at a cost of JD540,556. The JD780,744 second phase involves supervising the work and will take 30 months to complete.

Dr. Haddadin said the project in the Amman region is being financed through a German Development Bank loan.

The second agreement, which concerns laying the JD1,641,882 Wadi Musa network, will be partially financed by a French loan and completed in 460 days, the minister said.

This agreement entails laying 27 kilometres of main and branch networks.

The third agreement involves laying networks at the cost of JD1,022,606 in the villages of Taybeh, Badoul and Baida, and will be also be partially financed by the French loan, according to Dr. Haddadin.

The French loan totals JD1.37 million to be paid back over 22 years with a seven-year grace period.

Dr. Haddadin said the water projects in the Wadi Musa region should benefit the ancient city of Petra, where no water networks or water storage facilities currently exist, and are necessary to promote tourist services.

Minister calls for pan-Arab agreement unifying land transport regulations

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Sami Gammo on Monday opened a two-day meeting by the Arab Union of Land Transport (AULT) with a call for the conclusion of a pan-Arab agreement providing unified regulations on land transport to complement the existing agreement.

Mr. Gammo said the Arab League and Arab land transport organisations can help achieve this objective, which he said is of paramount importance since it would promote socio-economic development in the Arab World.

The minister told delegates from 11 Arab states that the transport sector faces three main challenges: lack of coordination among the respective national land transport organisations, poor data and statistical information, and the limited land transport network linking the Arab World.

Mr. Gammo said transport constitutes a major factor in development and facilitates closer cooperation, travel and the movement of workers and visitors within the Arab region.

In his address, Adnan Mufli, AULT secretary general, echoed the need for promoting the transport sector to further inter-Arab integration.

Citing the Jordan-Syria and Jordan-Iraq land transport companies, Mr. Mufli said joint projects like these represent the hoped for close ties among Arab countries.

During the meeting, the delegates will review a report on last year's activities and plans for 1998, and will elect a new board for the coming four years.

U.S. human rights report raises concerns on judiciary, discrimination against women

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The U.S. State Department's annual report on human rights in Jordan has raised concern over continued discrimination against women, alleged torture by security forces and the judiciary's exposure to external influences.

Government officials were not immediately available for comment on the 1997 report, which was received by the Jordan Times on Sunday.

"According to the Constitution, the judiciary is independent from other branches of the state; however, in practice, it is susceptible to outside influences," said the report.

A primary factor in weakening judges in carrying out their duties is that their appointment to, and advancement within, the judiciary is determined by a specially-appointed committee, according to the 29-page document.

However, the report underlined that "court rulings against the government in the past years indicate that the judiciary can function independently."

The High Court of Justice

earlier this year revoked tough government amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law, which greatly increased capital requirements for weeklies and dailies and prohibited the publication of news, opinion, reports, caricatures and photos that offend the army or harm the country's ties with friendly states.

According to the Foreign Assistance Act, the U.S. State Department submits its annual human rights reports on every country in the world to the U.S. Congress.

His Majesty King Hussein, on a private visit to Washington, is set to meet U.S. President Bill Clinton on Thursday to discuss the stalled Middle East peace process, Iraq and bilateral ties.

The U.S. report also pointed out restrictions on women's freedom of movement and gender discrimination in the legal and penal code, especially in matters of pension and social security benefits, inheritance, divorce, and the value of testimony in court.

"The law requires that all women and foreign women married to Jordanians obtain written permission from their

male guardians to apply for a passport," it said.

"A woman travelling abroad with children may also be required to show written authorisation from her spouse before departure. Legal authorities enforce requests from fathers to prevent their children from departing the country, even when travelling with their mothers."

Noting that "marital rape is legal," the report extensively deals with "honour crimes" — defined as a male killing a female relative on suspicion of an illicit relationship.

It noted that a man who killed his sister in May and invoked an honour crime defence received a three-month sentence.

In contrast, two women, Amira Salem and Eidah Hussein, who killed Salem's husband for physically and emotionally abusing her, were sentenced to death and hanged," the document added.

In the area of civil rights, the report maintained that "the security forces continue to commit human rights abuses," and cited "sleep deprivation, beatings, and extended solitary confinement" as the

most frequently alleged methods of torture.

"Although the legal code provides prisoners with the right to humane treatment, security and police forces sometimes abuse detainees physically during interrogation. Torture allegations are difficult to verify because security officials frequently deny detainees timely access to lawyers."

Political rights violations mainly included citizens' inability to change their system of government and the under-representation of Jordanians of Palestinian origin in legislative and executive bodies.

"The Palestinian community, estimated to be slightly over one-half the total population, is not represented proportionately in the government. Only six of 40 senators, and 11 of 80 Lower House deputies are of Palestinian origin," it said.

"The electoral system gives greater representation to areas that have few inhabitants of Palestinian origin."

Six ministers in the 23-member Cabinet of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali are of Palestinian origin.

what's going on

FILMS

German film "Der Papageno" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jafal, Amman on Wednesday March 18 at 2:00 p.m.

"King Rat (Black & White)" at the British Council, Jafal, Amman at 6:00 p.m. (also showing children's film "The Village Who Tamed the Giant" on Wednesday March 18 at 5:00 p.m.)

LA FRANCOPHONIE WEEK

Screening of a series of French films with subtitles in Arabic at the QM Hall, Amman. Monday March 16 at 8:30 p.m. Tuesday March 17 at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday March 18 at 8:30 p.m.

LECTURE

The new lecture "The French film: from silent to sound" and "The French film: from silent to sound" at the QM Hall, Amman. Monday March 16 at 8:30 p.m. Tuesday March 17 at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday March 18 at 8:30 p.m.

THE JORDANIAN FILM FESTIVAL

First performances of the festival at the QM Hall, Amman. Monday March 16 at 8:30 p.m. Tuesday March 17 at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday March 18 at 8:30 p.m.

Jazz trio combines traditional, Arabic elements for original performance

By Omar Karmi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — As part of the Francophonie Week, organised by the French Cultural Centre, the Emmanuel Bex jazz trio performed Sunday night at the 1001 Night Club at the Meridian Hotel.

The trio, led by organist Emmanuel Bex with saxophonist Sylvain Beuf and drummer Fabrice Laizeau, started the evening by invoking Arabic music in the first tune. Those scales were rubbed like Aladdin's lamp, and the genie of audience appreciation immediately reared his benevolent head. From the first tune on, the audience was always with this very intense trio.

All the compositions were original, testifying to the creativity of Emmanuel Bex himself, who won the coveted Django Reinhardt Prize in 1995. Screwing his eyes up immediately he sat down at his Hammond to play, and nodding his head in time to the music, seemingly oblivious to the audience, his enthusiasm soon spread to an audience which applauded every solo Bex and Beuf traded in their very intimate performance.

Apart from the Arabic influence (which was acquired during a workshop in Damascus with Arab jazz musicians last year), the music swung stylistically from traditional through fusion to avant garde. Sometimes Beuf's sax (and also sax) would invoke memories of Coleman, sometimes of Brecker.

The combination, however, of sax with the Hammond gave the trio its own "gimmick." The very distinctive sound of the Hammond lent the music its fusion, sometimes even funk, feel. The bass was played on the left hand, and the swirls and licks from the right were automatically sustained and drawn out by the organ, with the control displayed marking a true craftsman.

The Hammond sound, however, can also invoke unpleasant memories of swanky hotel lobbies and elevator rides and, as the first set wound down, a solo piece on the Hammond did just that. From a hip, cool cat jazz club, the 1001 Night Club suddenly got stuck somewhere between the tenth and eleventh floor.

Things picked up again in the second set, with a leaner audience due to the late hour of 11:30. The first composition pushed Laizeau's drums into the foreground, exposing him as a virtuoso with the sticks. First brushes, then sticks, emphasised both the slow and lazy quiet moments and the fast, pushing and furious energetic ones.

An improvised introduction to the next composition saw the three stretched to their limits of mutual understanding, communication always directed by the band-leader. Another Arabic-inspired piece, with traces of "Caravan," almost brought the audience to their feet, before a long, slow, soulful solo sax introduction gave Beuf ample opportunity to show off his talent. The evening ended with a classic piece of showmanship, as the audience's rhythmic clapping was rewarded with a deep,

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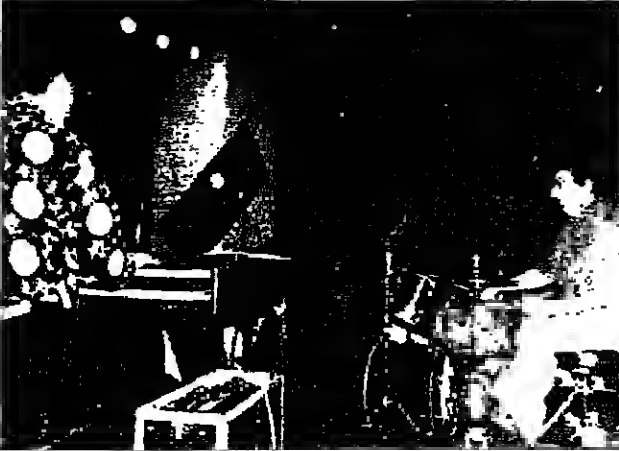
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Emmanuel Bex and drummer Fabrice Laizeau serve up some jazz at the 1001 Night Club Sunday evening (Photo by Musallam Kanafani)

dramatic theatre bow by all three musicians.

An all too rare jazz gig in Amman, which proved that there is both an interested and knowledgeable audience for this music in Jordan. May there be many more.

The Francophonie week continues until March 27.

French left wins regional elections

PARIS (AFP) — France's governing Socialist-led coalition swept regional elections Sunday with about 36 per cent of the vote taking over more than half of the country's 22 regions after winning only two five years ago, according to estimates.

The mainstream rightwing parties, the neo-Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR), centre-right Union for French Democracy (UDF) and smaller groups, garnered around 36 per cent of the vote while the ultra-right National Front won about 14 per cent, the estimates showed.

But a tidal wave by the left, predicted by some, did not materialise. In the wake of the right's legislative election debacle last June, the regions had been expected to follow suit.

But Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement said the governing "plural left" coalition of Socialists, Communists and Greens stood poised to win a dozen

regions. The IPSOS polling institute gave the "plural left" coalition of Socialists, Communists and Greens 36.81 per cent in the vote for the country's 22 metropolitan regions and four located in territories overseas. The far left garnered more than four per cent.

RPR spokesman François Fillon called the results "very mediocre" while former Gaullist Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, who led the conservative campaign in the Paris region, said: "We must reconquer confidence. We must once again offer hope for the future. It will be a long road."

Anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen claimed Sunday his party was now the "only national opposition force, the only stable force, the only force of the right with a heart."

The mainstream rightwing coalition and smaller groups garnered 36.33 per cent of the vote, according

to polls, which credited the National Front with 14.58 per cent.

Estimates said the left would win control of 12 to 15 of the country's 22 regions while the right would keep control of five to eight. In 1992, the right won control of 22 out of the total 26 regions. In last year's general elections, the leftwing parties won 42.3 per cent of the vote while the moderate right garnered 35.7 per cent.

Voter turnout tumbled to a record low in Sunday's elections, which were viewed as a test of the Socialist-led coalition's first 10 months in office.

Polling institutes estimated final turnout plunging some 10 points against the 1992 regional vote turnout of 68.9 per cent.

Abstentionism rarely overshoots the 30 per cent mark in France.

Plum prize in the vote was the Ile-de-France region around Paris, home to one out of five people, which

estimates said swung to the left for the first time in what was a grave blow to the mainstream RPR and UDF.

In Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, on the Mediterranean, the left appeared about to win a slim majority of 40-42 seats with 38-40 for the mainstream right and a hefty 36-38 seats for the National Front.

Analysts said low turnout was a probable indicator of disaffection among conservative voters and was favouring the National Front, which is likely to hold the balance of power Friday when elected regional councillors decide on who heads the regional assemblies.

But leaders of both the mainstream left and right said they would not make deals with the National Front.

If the parties stick by these promises, the right or left will be able to win the top positions with only a relative majority.



French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin is cheered by supporters after the announcement of the provisional results of the French regional elections in his home constituency at Cintegabelle, southwestern France (Reuters photo)

Ex-aide cites unwanted Clinton advances, says he lied under oath

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A former White House volunteer charged on national television Sunday that President Bill Clinton kissed and groped her in the Oval Office against her will, and that he later lied when denying the incident under oath.

In a 40-minute interview on the CBS television news programme "60 Minutes", Kathleen Willey, 51, claimed she felt "overpowered" by Mr. Clinton when he kissed her, touched her breast and placed her hand on his genitals during a meeting in November 1993.

Mr. Clinton "adamantly denies" the charges, his personal lawyer, Robert Bennett, told CBS.

Ms. Willey's account contradicts Mr. Clinton's January deposition in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case against him, possibly opening the president up to perjury charges which, if proven, could force him to resign from office or be impeached.

"I just could not believe ... the recklessness of that act," Ms. Willey said.

"I thought, 'Maybe I ought to just give him a good slap across the face.' And then I thought, 'Well, I don't think you can slap the President of the United States like that,'" Ms. Willey said.

Asked whether Mr. Clinton lied when he testified that he made no sexual advance in the meeting, Ms. Willey looked directly at her interviewer and said: "Yes."

In a quivering voice, Ms. Willey recounted how, in desperate financial straits, she went to see the president to

request a paid White House job after her lawyer husband came under suspicion of embezzling money.

Her "good friend" initially appeared sympathetic, but she ended up having to fend off what she described as his "unwelcome and unexpected" advances, she stated.

The president hugged her longer than she expected, kissed her on the lips, put her hand on his aroused genitals, touched her breasts and told her that he had "wanted to do that" for a long time, she said.

Mr. Bennett countered that the president said "he hugged her (and) may have given her a kiss on the forehead," in an effort to console a "terribly distraught" Willey.

The whole controversy stems from the Paula Jones case, Mrs. Jones is suing Mr. Clinton for \$2 million for an incident in 1991, when he was Arkansas governor and she a state employee.

Mrs. Jones says Mr. Clinton exposed himself and asked for oral sex.

Ms. Willey said she felt "pressured" by Mr. Bennett to tailor her testimony in the Jones case to match that of the president.

Ms. Willey said she and Mr. Bennett met before her deposition "and he mentioned that ... the president thought the world of me, and he said, 'now, this — this was not sexual harassment was it,'" Ms. Willey said.

Mr. Bennett was "implying that I was going to face some kind of criminal charge of perjury," Ms. Willey said.

Mr. Clinton received another black eye Sunday when

Patricia Ireland, head of the powerful National Organisation for Women (NOW), strongly condemned his alleged behaviour.

"We're talking about ... sexual predators and people who in positions of power use that power to take advantage of women," Ms. Ireland told CNN.

NOW and other feminist groups, who largely support the president's policies, have been criticised for not publicly condemning Mr. Clinton when they did condemn former Oregon Republican Senator Bob Packwood and conservative Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas for similar alleged behaviour.

The only bright spot for Mr. Clinton came when Ms. Willey described former White House aide Linda Tripp, famous for secretly taping statements by former intern, Monica Lewinsky, alleging an affair with the president.

Ms. Tripp, who had been appointed by President George Bush, had a strong dislike for Mr. Clinton.

"I'm going to get you, and ... everyone else in this place, before this is all over," Ms. Willey cited Ms. Tripp as saying after Ms. Tripp was transferred to the Pentagon.

Ms. Willey told Ms. Tripp of the alleged unwelcome sexual encounter, which Ms. Tripp then blamed for her job transfer.

"I know you're here because the president wants you here ... and they want me out of here because I ... know what happened," Ms. Willey quoted Ms. Tripp as saying.



Former White House volunteer Kathleen Willey (left) speaks with correspondent Ed Bradley during the taping of an interview March 12 in Richmond, Virginia, for the CBS news programme "60 Minutes", broadcast on March 15 (Reuters photo)

Burundi prosecutors drop case against genocide suspect

BUJUMBURA (AFP) — The Burundi public prosecutor's office Monday withdrew its case against a former speaker of parliament, Leonce Nkundakumana, who had been accused of genocide, an official source said.

Nkundakumana, a member of the Hutu majority in the Central African country which is torn by ethnic strife, had been facing prosecution and was banned from leaving Burundi.

Officials said Monday that the case had been withdrawn for the absence of substantive evidence against the former speaker, who had been accused of

taking part in genocide in 1993.

A lifting of the travel ban on Nkundakumana was demanded by regional heads of state who imposed an embargo against Burundi after former ruler and Tutsi army major Pierre Buyoya seized back power in July 1996.

The regional leaders decided on Feb. 21 to maintain the economic sanctions.

In 1993, tens of thousands of people were killed in massacres which broke out after the assassination of Burundi's elected Hutu President Melchior Ndadaye, who had beaten Mr. Buyoya at the polls in

June that year.

Hutu extremists have since stepped up guerrilla activities against the Tutsi-dominated army and the country has plunged into civil war, which Mr. Buyoya pledged to end.

On Feb. 25, the regime's war council decided to free former President Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, another Tutsi former military ruler who had been accused of plotting against Mr. Buyoya.

The release of both Bagaza and Nkundakumana were among measures demanded at a regional summit held in the Ugandan capital Kampala four days earlier.

French police expel African migrants from church

PARIS (R) — Police Monday evacuated about 100 illegal African immigrants from a south Paris church which they had peacefully occupied to press demands to be allowed to settle in France.

A spokesman for the black immigrants said police detained several people among those who had occupied St. Jeanne d'Arc Church Sunday.

Two dozen Mauritians occupied St. Pierre Church in the Normandy port of Le Havre Saturday, and several dozen African immigrants have been inside every cathedral outside Paris since March 7.

The protesting migrants are bachelors who arrived in France without their families. Authorities have vowed not to let individuals with such status remain in France if they entered illegally.

Two years ago, a group of African families who also entered France illegally, but whose children were later born in the country, occupied St. Bernard Church in northern Paris.

Their plight, and their brutal expulsion by police after several weeks of occupation, sparked nationwide sympathy.

Authorities ended up giving most of them papers allowing them to stay in France, saying this was for the sake of their children.

The left-wing government which came to power last June is studying applications for residence permits by more than 140,000 illegal immigrants.

Genetic research must be regulated, warns Australian expert

MELBOURNE, Australia (AFP) — An Australian High Court judge and bioethics expert warned Monday that genetic research could threaten human rights if there were not enough safeguards.

Judge Michael Kirby also told a public forum on genetics, law and ethics that effective national laws were essential to prevent human cloning because non-binding international declarations were not enough.

Judge Kirby, a member of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) International Bioethics

Committee and the Human Genome Organisation's Ethics Committee, said it was timely this year, the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to consider potential challenges to fundamental human rights.

Half a century ago, oppression and neglect were the main foes. But he said the new challenges to human rights are certainly likely to include the consequences of science and technology such as the impact of genetic research on human diversity.

Genomic research — research into the complete genetic material for any cell —

provided a vital opportunity to relieve pain and prevent premature death, he said.

"But good science in relation to our species' genetic map will require good ethics and effective laws," he said in his speech.

Judge Kirby praised last year's unanimous adoption at the UNESCO general conference of the voluntary Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights.

The declaration's provisions include prohibitions on human cloning and limits on genetic manipulation.

Seed's determination to clone human beings showed non-binding declarations were not enough, Judge Kirby added.

"Effective national laws are required if such statements of ethical principle are to be converted into enforceable duties."

The potential benefits and dilemmas thrown up by the technology ranged from whether employers and family members should have access to genetic information to the patenting of discoveries.

Judge Kirby, who heads Paris next week for the first UNESCO conference meeting to follow up the latest declara-

Students in new clashes with police in Indonesia

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesian students clashed with police here Monday when they tried to march out of their campus in a demonstration demanding reforms.

The 75 students scuffled with baton-wielding police before fleeing back into the National University campus. Some students threw rocks at the security forces, who had retreated beyond the university grounds.

There was no serious injuries, although one photographer was trampled as she was caught between the students and the riot police.

In the East Java province

capital of Surabaya, hundreds of students staged a rally under tight security to demand political reform.

But the 300 students stayed on their campus at Surabaya Institute of Technology in the East Java province capital of Surabaya to avoid a repeat of clashes with security forces at two demonstrations last week.

The students called for reforms, clean government and lower prices for essential goods as about 200 police in riot gear looked on.

Student leaders gave speeches repeating their demands before the crowd

dispersed.

Police fired tear-gas at students last Thursday when they attempted to march from the campus.

Police and baton-wielding troops bear the students two days earlier when they first tried to march to the nearby Airlangga University.

Tens of thousands of students staged rallies across the country last week as President Suharto was returned to office for a seventh five-year term.

Authorities have tolerated protests on campuses but warned they will not allow any which stray from university grounds.

Rival Afghan factions broker truce in northern stronghold

KABUL (AFP) — Two rival factions of Afghanistan's anti-Taliban alliance have brokered a truce to halt two days of heavy fighting for control of their northern stronghold, sources said Monday.

Independent sources in Mazar-i-Sharif said fighters loyal to ethnic-Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam attempting to dislodge the dominant Shiite Muslim Hezb-i-Wahdat faction began a ceasefire late Sunday.

The factions brokered a ceasefire to begin Sunday at six o'clock but it did not take effect until ten, "an independent source in the city reported."

However both factions, key members of a coalition battling the hardline Taliban, remain firmly entrenched in city-centre positions.

"The situation is still extremely tense, and still nobody is sure whether or not the ceasefire will hold," another source in contact with the city added.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), whose office had for two days been in the middle of the battle with delegates taking refuge in the basement, said staff had moved to a quieter part of the city.

"At seven this morning the delegates left the office, which has been damaged by the fighting," said Juan Martinez, ICRC spokesman in Kabul. "The city is now reported to be a little calmer."

Mr. Martinez said the ICRC was Monday planning to send a plane to Mazar-i-Sharif to pull out non-essential ICRC staff as well as foreign aid workers from three other agencies based in the city.

"This is not an evacuation: those who can continue their normal duties are staying behind and those who are leaving will only do so on a temporary basis," Mr. Martinez said.

So far there have been no independent reports of casualties from the fighting.

which for two days rocked the city centre with fire from mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns.

Mazar-i-Sharif is Afghanistan's only city not under Taliban control and the current seat of government for the anti-Taliban alliance, a coalition of factions battling the hardline Islamic militia.

The Shiite Muslim faction Hezb-i-Wahdat gained hegemony in Mazar-i-Sharif late last year when it masterminded a massive defence of the city from a major Taliban attack in September.

Since then Mr. Dostam — once the dominant power in the city — has attempted to wrest control of the dusty stronghold of the shaky anti-Taliban alliance.

The coalition includes ex-Communist Dostam, Hezb-i-Wahdat, the ousted Kabul government loyal to ex-president Burhanuddin Rabbani and commander Ahmad Shah Masood and at least five other splinter groups.

China welcomes U.S. decision on rights resolution

BEIJING (AFP) — China Monday warmly welcomed Washington's decision not to sponsor a resolution critical of its human rights record at the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

"We welcome this news and appreciate it," said Li Baodong, vice-director of the foreign ministry's international organisations and conferences departments here.

"If the U.S. does not table any anti-China resolution at the Human Rights Commission, that will be conducive to strengthening cooperation in the field of human rights," he said.

"Although there are many differences between the two countries in the field of human rights, there is also a lot of common ground."

Washington said Saturday that for the first time since 1990 it would not support a resolution critical of China due to be tabled at the Geneva-based commission this week.

A White House spokesman highlighted what he said was Beijing's recent advances in the field, including the freeing of political dissident Wei Jingsheng in November and last week's announcement that it would sign the U.N. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

European Union countries have also said they will not support the resolution.

Human rights watchdog Amnesty International has expressed regret at the decision of the U.S. government.

"The United States is exaggerating the few positive developments in China during 1997 and using them as an excuse to avoid censuring China" at the commission's meeting, the rights group said in a statement released in Washington Saturday.

1st woman to hang in India

NEW DELHI (AFP) — An Indian housewife will be hanged next month in the first death sentence handed out to a woman since the country's independence 50 years ago, a daily said Monday.

The Pioneer newspaper said Ram Shri, 37, would be hanged on April 6 for murdering her uncle three years ago in a family feud. It said Shri, deserted by her family after her imprisonment, was concerned about the fate of her three-year-old daughter who was born in captivity. Last week, the high court of the northern city of Allahabad, dismissed her appeal.

Jail officials said she kept repeating a single phrase: "What will happen to my daughter?"

Shri can still appeal to the Supreme Court. Death sentences are frequently commuted to life imprisonment upon appeal. The president also has the power to issue pardons.

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Former S. Korean prisoners demand further releases

SEOUL (R) — Fourteen South Korean political prisoners released last week demanded Monday the release of all such prisoners in the country.

The group said in a statement that only 15 per cent of 478 so-called prisoners of conscience had been released in last week's amnesty by President Kim Dae-Jung, compared with 28 per cent freed in the first amnesty granted by former President Kim Young-Sam.

"What the government called the country's biggest-ever amnesty is disappointing," said Buddhist Monk Jin Kwan, who was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison for helping North Korea.

"This government has inherited intact the cold war mentality. We urge the release of all of the 400-some prisoners of conscience," Monk Jin told a news conference.

Friday, President Kim Dae-Jung, himself a former political prisoner, granted amnesty to 5.5 million people ranging from political prisoners to drunk drivers whose licences had been revoked.

But Amnesty International said Saturday the amnesty does not go far enough and should be followed up by further releases of prisoners.

"Obviously the release of some political prisoners is welcome," the London-based human rights organisation said in a press release.

"But we are dismayed that so many other prisoners

were excluded; the continued imprisonment of so many people for their political views is unacceptable in an open and democratic society," the release said.

Of the 2,304 people serving sentences for various offences who were freed under the amnesty, only 74 were political prisoners.

Noting discontent with last week's amnesty, the ruling National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) Monday said it would recommend that President Kim grant another amnesty on May 3, Buddha's birthday.

"The amnesty last week seems to have fallen short of expectations," said NCNP spokesman Yoon Ho-Jung. "So our party has decided to propose another amnesty on Buddha's birthday."

The president has not responded to the call for another amnesty.

The government said it had planned last week's amnesty in an attempt to create harmony among Koreans and help the nation overcome its current financial crisis.

Kim Dae-Jung spent years in jail, including a spell on death row, for opposing previous military rulers.

Mr. Kim's first amnesty had failed to release Woo Yong-Gak, a North Korean commando who has spent the last 40 years in prison and has refused to recant his Communist beliefs. Mr. Woo is said to be the world's longest-serving political prisoner.



A column of ethnic Albanian women march outside town of Pristina, the capital of the Serbia's province of Kosovo (Reuters photo)

S. Korean intelligence suspected of contacting North for smear campaign

SEOUL (AFP) — Prosecutors are investigating confidential papers to determine whether South and North Korean intelligence officials conducted a joint smear campaign against President Kim Dae-Jung, reports said Monday.

The Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP) responded nervously by issuing a warning that such reports "true or not" could "seriously damage our security posture." It urged the press to be cautious.

But the ANSP did not deny the reported contacts, saying all details of the alleged "North Wind" operation against Kim Dae-Jung would be revealed after a full investigation.

The reports, carried in most Seoul newspapers, said the ANSP exchanged papers with North Korean officials in Beijing shortly before South Korea's presidential election last December.

"We're currently investigating it," an unnamed presidential official was quoted by Yonhap News Agency as saying.

The ANSP papers "are presumed to verify" that North Korea helped the campaign by the Seoul agency to foil Kim Dae-Jung's presidential bid, Yonhap said.

The newspaper reports said the ANSP papers under investigation contained every detail of the agency's "North Wind" operation including the names of South and North Korean officials involved.

North Wind refers to the North's sabre-rattling which has repeatedly heightened tensions between the two warring Koreas during crucial events or political crises in South Korea.

The Munhwa newspaper said the intelligence agency, formerly the South Korean CIA, had sent an unspecified "big" amount of money in U.S. dollars to North Korean officials in return for their help in portraying Mr. Kim as a leftist sympathiser.

But it said the Seoul government was reluctant to disclose details of its investigation before peace talks which start in Geneva this week involving the two Koreas, China and the United States.

Other newspapers claimed that South and North Korean intelligence officials were suspected of having activated their "secret connection" on several occasions.

Diplomats have long suggested that the intelligence agencies of the two Koreas are in constant contact, citing past secret meetings of top officials which have led in the 1970's and later in the early 1990's to brief thaws in the dragging cold war.

Some have even speculated on the existence of a link between "hardliners" on both sides who want to keep the de-facto state of war going.

However the subject has until now been taboo in Seoul, where the powers of the ANSP are all-pervasive.

Two newspapers in Seoul claimed that the ANSP also sent money to its northern counterpart in 1992 when North Korean troops turned up in the truce village of Panmunjom with heavy weapons banned by the 1953 truce agreement.

The show of force in Panmunjom prompted a security alert in South Korea, leading to the then-ruling party victory in parliamentary elections.

This week's investigation was part of Kim Dae-Jung's drive to reform the intelligence agency, which has been dogged by a long record of human rights violations and interference in politics.

South Korean prosecutors have already arrested five ANSP officials and a Korean resident of the United States for fabricating letters allegedly sent by the North to Kim Dae-Jung, a former dissident.

In addition, a travel ban has been imposed on former ANSP head Kwon Young-Hae and other senior intelligence officials.

Serbian police thwart march by Kosovo women

PRISTINA, Serbia (R) — Police thwarted hundreds of Kosovo Albanian women trying to march Monday from Pristina to mountain villages where scores of ethnic Albanians died in a Serbian police crackdown this month.

Riot police with batons blocked the way out of Pristina as up to 1,000 women, each bearing a symbolic loaf of bread, set off in freezing weather.

March leaders made no attempt to force their way through and the column of women wheeled round to return to the town without incident.

Each protester approached to within a few feet of the police line and brandished her loaf before leaving.

"We must turn around because we do not want to provoke the police or cause any incident," one organiser told reporters. "But the international community is acting far too slowly and we must do something to help the people."

The women had intended to march to the Drenica region 45 km west of Pristina where at least 80 people were killed and thousands fled during a police attack on alleged strongholds of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

Ethnic Albanians are demanding independence for the southern Serbian province where they make up 90 per cent of the 1.8 million population.

A spokesman for the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), the main Albanian political party, said the community's leaders would boycott talks in Pristina Monday with Serbian government envoys.

The Albanians also stayed away from two meetings last week as the United

States and its allies piled pressure for compromise on Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

A week of intense diplomatic activity over Kosovo was in prospect with no sign from Mr. Milosevic that he was prepared to budge from his position that its future was an internal matter for Serbia.

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov was due to meet Serbian leaders in Belgrade Tuesday and will be followed by the German and French foreign ministers.

Klaus Kinkel and Hubert Vedrine, later in the week.

The European Union has

chosen former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez to act as its special envoy to Kosovo in addition to his role representing the 34-nation Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Diplomats said Mr. Gonzalez could provide the outside mediation that the Kosovo Albanians have demanded.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott is visiting several neighbouring countries this week, including Albania and Macedonia, which has a large ethnic Albanian population.

While the United States

and its allies were urging both sides to compromise so that talks could start, both Mr. Milosevic and the Kosovo Albanians received backing at the weekend.

Albanian Prime Minister Fatos Nano said Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova was right to ignore the offer of "ridiculous" talks with the Serbian delegation last week because "it lacked the rank to make the discussions serious."

"The Kosovo authorities and the Albanian government want the international community to be a party in the talks," spokesman Ben Blushi quoted Mr. Nano as saying. Mr. Nano also repeated his call for Kosovo Albanians to show restraint.

In Belgrade, Serbian political parties united in ruling out independence for Kosovo, regarded by Serbs as the cradle of their culture, religion and statehood since the 13th century.

Vuk Draskovic, leader of the Serbian Renewal Party which is talking of joining the government, said the Kosovo Albanians "can never get a republic. Serbia will defend Kosmet (Kosovo) and let no one be deceived into thinking we will abandon it."

Even opposition Democratic Party leader Zoran Djindjic ruled out an independent Kosovo, saying it would destabilise the entire Balkans.

The show of unity was seen as strengthening Mr. Milosevic's position and leaving him with a free hand to deal with the problem.

The West has given Mr. Milosevic until March 25 to make headway on a dialogue with the Kosovo Albanians or face severe new sanctions, including the freezing of Serbia's assets abroad.

Muslim refugee leader in Brcko feels betrayed

BRCKO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AFP) — The head of the main organisation of refugees in the disputed Bosnian town of Brcko said Monday he felt betrayed by an arbitration panel's decision to postpone a decision on the fate of the town.

"I am very disappointed and I feel betrayed," said Enisa Hamidovic, who represents the organisation Brcko Bracima (Brcko for Brcko citizens).

"They care nothing about Bosnia and Brcko," he added, referring to the decision handed down Sunday by the International Arbitration Tribunal for Brcko.

The panel said in a statement criticised by both ethnic Serbs and Muslims that it would keep the strategic north-eastern town under international supervision "until the final phase of arbitration in late 1998 or early 1999."

"We have been cooperative, we did everything they asked us to do and in the end we get nothing," Mr. Hamidovic said. "They are aware of the situation, we have explained everything many times and all of the discussions were for nothing."

His said his organisation was not planning any demonstrations for the time being.

In announcing its decision, the international panel said it wanted to give the Bosnian Serbs — who have administered the town since seizing it at the start of the 1992-1995 Bosnian war — time to prove their new, more moderate government would implement reforms.

Settlement of the issue of who should run Brcko — claimed by the two Bosnian entities, both the Serbs' Republika Srpska (RS) and the Muslim-Croat Federation — had already been delayed for a year.

Partially confined to bed, sick Yeltsin delays return to Kremlin

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin put off his return to the Kremlin Monday and will remain partially confined to bed at an official residence near Moscow to recuperate from a fresh bout of illness, aides said.

Kremlin Doctor Sergei Mironov said that Mr. Yeltsin was "partially confined to bed" and would remain at his Gorky-9 residence although his comments, released by the presidency, did not say how long the confinement would last.

Dr. Mironov said the president, who abruptly cancelled all engagements Friday, was being treated with antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs for an inflammation of the nasal passage, a cough, and hoarse voice.

He added that his wife Naina, who celebrated her 66th birthday Saturday, was also sick and suffering from a fever of 38 degrees Celsius (100 degrees Fahrenheit).

Over the weekend, officials had said that Mr. Yeltsin would return to work Monday and insisted earlier Monday that the president would spend the day working on official documents at Gorky-9.

Mr. Yeltsin, 67, is due to attend a summit of leaders of the former Soviet republics later this week.

Sergei Shakrai, Mr. Yeltsin's representative on the Constitutional Court, said Monday "the president is getting better, but has not completely recovered his voice."

The pair met ahead of a session of the Constitutional Court, which is to examine Mr. Yeltsin's dispute with lawmakers over a controversial law voted by parliament banning the return of cultural artefacts seized by Soviet troops during World War II, notably from Germany.

Mr. Yeltsin abruptly cancelled all engagements Friday after being struck down by acute laryngitis and voice loss, the second infection of the respiratory tract suffered by the president in four months.

Late last year, Mr. Yeltsin was laid low for five weeks with an acute chest infection which triggered a fresh wave of speculation over his health and fitness to govern.

Celebrated cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, who had dinner with the Yeltsins Sunday, said he had personally convinced the president to delay his return to work.

In an interview with ITAR-TASS, Mr. Rostropovich said he and his wife had insisted that Mr. Yeltsin "give us his word that he would rest for longer."

The musician, a close friend of the president's, said Mr. Yeltsin had seemed "in good shape," and had not touched a drop of alcohol all evening due to his course of antibiotics.

Ironically, the latest health

scare came just days after Mr. Yeltsin insisted doctors had given him a clean bill of health and that the saga of his health problems was now a "closed book."

Mr. Yeltsin's health has been under the spotlight since aides hushed up a heart attack he suffered on the eve of his reelection in July 1996, the third attack suffered by the Kremlin chief in 15 months.

Although Mr. Yeltsin was reinvigorated by quintuple heart bypass surgery the following November, he has been prone to infections, suffering double pneumonia in January 1997 and falling ill again in December.

The president, almost 10 years older than the average life expectancy for average Russian males, has recently appeared to tire quickly.

However, the president's most recent indisposition was greeted calmly by the financial markets Friday, analysts saying Mr. Yeltsin is no longer the sole guarantor of reform in Russia.

U.S. war hero pleads for peace on Vietnam massacre anniversary

MY LAI, Vietnam (AFP) — A U.S. veteran who rescued Vietnamese villagers from the guns of American troops 30 years ago, marked the anniversary Monday with an appeal for world peace.

More than 1,000 people gathered at My Lai where U.S. soldiers slaughtered 504 villagers on March 16, 1968.

"If we could practice patience, understanding, cultural understanding and love, I believe in my heart and pray to God we can achieve peace on earth," said a tearful Lawrence Colburn.

Mr. Colburn was an 18-year-old door gunner on a reconnaissance helicopter flown by Hugh Thompson. Mr. Colburn, Mr. Thompson and Larry Andreota rescued 12 people from U.S. troops butchered people on the ground.

The massacre was the darkest chapter of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam and Mr. Thompson is still trying to come to terms with the atrocity.

"Something horrible happened, I'm sorry it happened and I can't explain why it happened," said Mr. Thompson.

"I just wish that our crew that day could have helped more people than we did," he said, standing in front of a massive cement sculpture commemorating the victims.

The sombre ceremony began with music played over loudspeakers as soldiers carrying wreaths marched in a slow goose step.

Government officials, students from the Communist youth league and villagers gathered around trees riddled with bullet holes to hear a tribute to victims from Hoang Ngoc Tran, provincial vice-chairman of the People's Committee.

Crowds also crammed into a museum at the site, housing war relics and gruesome pictures of the My Lai carnage.

Mr. Tran thanked the heroes for "trying to prevent the brutal acts of their companions and daring to speak the truth about the crimes."

But he also condemned the killers, particularly Lieutenant William Calley, as well as the U.S. military for attempting to

cover up the massacre.

"It was one of several crimes committed by the U.S. in Quang Ngai and in Vietnam in general," he said.

The event was kept quiet for more than a year. When the details were exposed, the United States and the world were appalled, especially by the butchery of Calley who led many of his victims to an irrigation ditch and filled it with their dead bodies.

Charged with murdering 109 and convicted for the deaths of 22, Calley was the only one punished. But his life prison sentence was reduced to three years under house arrest by President Richard Nixon.

Calley now lives in Georgia and runs a jewellery shop.

Later Mr. Thompson and Mr. Colburn attended a dedication ceremony and a school groundbreaking ceremony at a nearby peace park, being built with assistance of a U.S. humanitarian group.

The United States sent no officials, although U.S. Ambassador Pete Peterson last week in Hanoi described the event as "hateful, merciless, painful and unacceptable."

The two veterans Sunday were reunited with 76-year-old Nguyen Thi Ms. Nhung, one of the people they saved.

Ms. Nhung, who lost her husband at My Lai, said she owed her life to the three men, but said she would "always keep hate in my heart for those who killed my husband."

During their four-day visit to My Lai, the two veterans had hoped to meet Do Ba, now believed to be 36, whom they rescued as a boy from a pile of corpses left lying in an irrigation ditch.

In Washington on March 6, Mr. Thompson and Mr. Colburn received medals from the U.S. Army for their heroism.

Andreota, who was killed in Vietnam two months after My Lai, received the medal posthumously.

But their meeting with Mr. Ba did not occur. He is serving time in an reduction camp for stealing electric cable in Ho Chi Minh City.

Returns Are Stronger...

soon.

Lufthansa

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Negativism leads nowhere

THE DEBATE that took place on the Lower House of Parliament's floor on Sunday over the visit of a number of deputies to Tel Aviv earlier this month was a testimony, if one is needed, to a healthy democratic environment which despite the difficulties continues to permeate political life in this country. Democracy allows for all parties to express their views. But it also dictates that the minority respects the decisions of the majority. The debate showed that the majority of parliamentarians has no objection to the visit of their colleagues to Israel. In fact, many saw it as a necessary exercise to serve the interests of Jordan, the Palestinians and the cause of peace in the region.

The legislators who protested the visit did so out of their opposition to the 1994 peace treaty with Israel. That treaty, however, was endorsed by the 12th Parliament. The majority of parliamentarians who endorsed it then believes as the majority of deputies still believes today that Jordan should continue to use the accord with the Israelis to further its own interests and help realise Palestinian and Arab rights.

This much, we believe, was achieved by the visit of HRH Crown Prince Hassan and the lawmakers who accompanied him. According to information available to us, the visit aimed at, and succeeded in, reaching agreements that Jordan needs in the economic and infrastructural fields. Those agreements would enable Jordan to better utilise its water shares in the Yarmouk and Jordan rivers; they would help open the Palestinian market for more economic interaction with the Kingdom so that this market will not continue to be a captive market for Israel, so that occupation will not continue to be rewarding for the Jewish state. Also, they would help Jordan develop infrastructural projects that would create more jobs, generate more income and, ultimately, better the lives of all Jordanians.

Above and beyond this, the visit, as on earlier occasions, came in response to calls from our Palestinian brethren to help them in efforts to regain their rights. Which is what Jordan has always been ready to do.

In Israel, at a press conference and later at a dinner that was reported to the world by the Israeli, Arab and international media, the Crown Prince could not have been more forceful in asserting Jordanian, Arab and Palestinian rights and demanding that Israel respect them.

The Regent said that an independent Palestinian state on Palestinian national soil must be established, asserting that peace must be predicated on respecting the rights of all. He told Israelis that security is not the exclusive right of any one party. In its broader definition, which includes human and economic dimensions, security must be enjoyed by all peoples of the region.

Prince Hassan minced no words when he forcefully told Israeli politicians, intellectuals, parliamentarians and journalists that while Israel sees the past 50 years as five decades of achievement, we see them as 50 years of uprooting. And as Israel marks 50 years of its establishment, said the Crown Prince, we remember and honour the martyrs of the Arab Legion who fell while defending Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine.

In short, the visit was an example of Jordan's proactive approach that advocates work, and hard work, for realising its rights and defending its interests and those of the Arab Nation. It is a policy that yields results. Negativism and complacency, on the other hand, do not. And what Jordan and the Palestinians need are results, not mere statements.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Nazih criticised a government plan for retrieving loans given to farmers and the interest on them saying that although these payments have been rescheduled the Jordanian farmers are in no position to respond favourably. The majority of the farmers are burdened with debts accumulated over the years due to bad harvests and poor sale of crops, noted the writer. He said in years when crops were abundant the farmers could not earn sufficient money to provide for their families nor be able to pay debts and interest because of the surplus of products glutting the local markets earning them little cash. The farmers have been appealing to the government to waive interest on the loans and reschedule the principal because of their inability to pay, but the government has recently served the farmers notice that they have to promptly pay their dues, according to the writer. He asked what if the farmers decide not to respond to the government's order and fail to make their payments? The writer suggested that the government sponsored institutions like the Agricultural Credit Corporation should work out a formula that provides for assistance to the farmers in case of drought and helps them pay their dues without interest, spread over longer periods of time in view of the difficulties facing the agricultural sector.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Saleh Qalab described Israel's decision to withdraw from the occupied parts of southern Lebanon as a defeat resembling that which befell the American forces in Vietnam. The writer said it is Ariel Sharon, the Israeli infrastructure minister, who is advocating the withdrawal and it is the same Sharon who led the Israeli forces in their invasion of Lebanon in 1982. When he reached Beirut Sharon thought that he was king ruling over large realms from an invincible army which could subdue the various Arab countries around Israel. Qalab said, Faced with the ignominious defeat in Lebanon at the hands of the Hizbollah resistance forces Sharon and Netanyahu are now trying to take revenge on the Palestinian people under their control, practising all forms of atrocities and oppression, the writer noted. Should the present criminal Israeli measures persist in Palestine, he said, the Palestinians will be transformed into Hizbollah-like resistance forces to deal yet another defeat on the arrogant occupation forces.

View from the Fourth Circle

The Magna Carta, rising poverty, and the fragmenting Arab state

By Rami G. Khouri

THE ANNOUNCEMENT by Jordan's minister of social development this week that our poverty rate had increased to 26 per cent will provide fresh fuel for those who see the entire Arab World steadily deteriorating and splitting into two very different worlds of rich and poor. The prevalent political analysis sees the poor getting poorer in the Middle East, more people slipping from the realm of the middle class to the ranks of the poor, and the rich becoming more rich.

I think such an analysis of Middle Eastern political-economic trends is simplistic, incomplete, and probably inaccurate, because it ignores factors that are more important, in the final analysis, than cash income alone. I would suggest a different analytical approach, based on two principal points: a) the middle class in the Arab World is not shrinking and becoming poorer, but rather expanding and consolidating; b) the classification of people by family income as upper, middle or lower income, or class, is outdated and perhaps meaningless, because the fragmentation of Arab society into different classes with very varied living standards is not related primarily to economic income, but rather to one's connections to cultural-ethnic-tribal and political forces within the modern Arab state.

Of course poverty is increasing in the Arab World, as more and more people complain of financial pressures on their family budgets. Unemployment, health problems, low education and skills levels, and insufficient assistance programmes in society condemn many of the truly poor to chronic poverty — until the economy as a whole expands enough to pull them out of poverty. There are some but still few signs of this happening in the coming years, for any real economic expansion will be siphoned off to repay past debts and to reward the middle and upper income classes — mainly because the poor are not politically organised, and thus cannot impact on decision-making in anything more than a symbolic and episodic manner (such as after bread riots here and there).

The available data, analysed only mathematically, does indicate that the middle class is shrinking, as the poor increase and the very rich also increase. The major living conditions survey conducted recently in Jordan, for example, shows that over 45 per cent of families have a total annual household income of JD 1450-1800 (\$2100-\$2600 or less). This means that about half of all Jordanian families might be living on an average cash income of around JD 100 per month (\$145 per month). This is supported by the latest economic statistics showing that in the last decade (1985-1996) gross domestic

product per capita in Jordan (at current market prices) declined from \$1896 to \$1646, because population expansion far outpaced economic expansion; in real terms, accounting for inflation, the decline in individual income is much worse.

These troubling trends are not fully reflected in society in Jordan or throughout the Arab World, however, where relative calm and stability are the rule, and violent demonstrations or rebellions the intermittent exception to that rule. Why should this be, and how can we reconcile an apparent contradiction between the declining mathematical trends in living conditions and the relatively stable political and social conditions?

The answer requires us to see the bigger picture surrounding the narrow economic statistics. The bigger picture and the trend over recent decades suggest that we should define people's quality of life not in terms of cash income, but rather in terms of their proximity to the two basic sources of real economic power in society: the state, and the private sector. The fragmentation of Arab society is not mainly into many poor, fewer middle class, and increasingly large numbers of rich; rather, the primary division taking place is between the institutions of the state, the private sector, and the marginalised rest of society.

More specifically, the fiscally strapped modern Arab state is turning in towards itself and forming a new core that is defined by the principal actors that used to form most Arab countries at the hands of Euro-colonial state-makers in the early decades of this century: the civil and armed bureaucracy, and the tribal-ethnic elite (how fascinating: the same thing also happened in, say, 3rd Millennium Egypt, 6th century B.C. Greece, 13th century AD England, 15th century Spain, and 18th century America — making the Arab World today a comforting model of historical normalcy, rather than exceptionalism).

The gradual closing-in of the state and its many employees to cater primarily to their needs — witness, for example, Egypt, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, and Lebanon, to mention only the more dramatic examples — is politically possible because those who benefit from their participation in the bounty of the state comprise either a small majority or a powerful plurality. The real middle class in Arab society today comprises those families who can call on the services, employment, privileges and protection of the state, and who have guaranteed access to these assets when they need them. This political and functional middle class comprises 40-60 per cent of most

Arab countries, has been growing, not shrinking, and remains both substantial and strong.

As most Arab state bureaucracies gradually stop trying to provide full basic services to all their people, those available services that continue to be provided by the state slowly fall under the dominance of the traditional tribal-ethnic elite — the Benjamin Franklins, Thomas Jeffersons, and Joseph Kennedys of the modern Middle East. The ongoing redefinition of Arab statehood in terms of tribalised bureaucracies and bureaucratized ethnicities sends out two other important messages: a) the rich, dynamic, and innovative in society can move in and occupy those economic and political spaces being vacated by the state, mainly through the large and expanding front door of privatisation (notice trends in our societies in education, health, water, telephones, and even security), and b) the weak, marginalised and poor will have to fend for themselves for the time being, unless they can gain access to the state through tribal-ethnic links, or to the private sector through these and other means.

The majority of Arabs — and certainly the majority in Jordan — seem able to achieve the critical task of gaining access to the power and wealth of the state or the private sector, primarily through tribal-ethnic connections. Very few Arab families suffer frightening isolation or desperation, despite low and declining real incomes. This is why sustained economic regression in our region results in only occasional outbursts of violence, rather than chronic chaos; this is also why modern bureaucratized Arab states that collapse for a long or short while (Lebanon, Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, Kuwait) continue to operate on the strength of their tribal-ethnic infrastructures.

The political economy of the Middle East urgently needs new indicators and analytical tools that can more accurately explain to us what is happening in our region, and what the future holds. If we are to continue hearing every successive Arab minister of social development or labour or education explain that we need a comprehensive strategy to address poverty, we should also demand more accurate means of measuring our real poverty and wealth, and our true well-being and vulnerability. One hopes that the continuing transformation of the Arab state would also quickly release indigenous Arab technical competence, political honesty, and moral courage, so that our journey to a statehood of political stability and material well-being takes less than the half a millennium or so that Europe required to move from the Magna Carta to the French Revolution.

The catastrophe Blair, Clinton and Saddam have in common

By Robert Fisk

SOMETHING TERRIBLE happened towards the end of the 1991 Gulf war. While we were congratulating ourselves that the Iraqi army had been driven out of Kuwait and Saddam Hussein had been (supposedly) "defanged," an unknown chemical plague spread across southern Mesopotamia. It was to cripple British and American soldiers, along with untold thousands of Iraqis, some of them children as yet unborn. In the years to come — when it began to afflict our own veterans — we called it "Gulf War Syndrome."

So did the Americans. As for the Iraqis, they remained silent for years — even as their own people began to fall victim to unexplained cancers around the former battlefields. Even now, Saddam Hussein's regime has made not a single statement about the epidemic of cancers afflicting the largely Shiite Muslim population. Here, then, is something which President Clinton, Prime Minister Blair and Saddam Hussein have in common: a total failure to explain the calamity afflicting thousands of their people after the 1991 conflict.

Nor can there be any doubt that Americans, British and Iraqis are suffering from the same affliction. As I was touring the cancer wards of Basra and Baghdad recently, looking at the men and women and especially children who

are dying of lymphatic cancers — the cause of which, Iraqi doctors said, was use by the Allies of depleted uranium shells — Tony Flint, the acting chairman of the British Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association, was warning that the very same shells could be responsible for cancers that have killed at least 50 British veterans. Just one day later, the American National Gulf Resource Centre, representing a coalition of U.S. veterans groups, announced that as many as 40,000 American servicemen may have been exposed to depleted uranium dust on the 1991 battlefields.

The kidney problems, respiratory failures and cancers now being diagnosed among allied veterans appear to be identical to those afflicting Iraqis. In most cases, the Iraqi victims were diagnosed only years later — just as Gulf War Syndrome was only grudgingly acknowledged in London and Washington, long after allied troops had returned home. I first heard of these symptoms among Iraqis last year, when an Iraqi opposition leader in Damascus — a Shiite cleric who knew former Iraqi troops seeking refuge in southern Iran following the 1991 war — told me that many of these ex-soldiers had fallen ill. Most had fought in the tank battles south-west of Basra; their armour was being bombarded with depleted uranium shells by the U.S. First

Infantry Division. American troops were exposed to the same dust when they moved forward after the battles and helped to destroy the contaminated wreckage of the Iraqi armoured units.

In southern Iraq, the battlefields west of Basra include some of the city's best farmland; its inhabitants continue to eat tomatoes, onions, potatoes and meat from fields that were almost certainly drenched in uranium dust. The same toxic residues must have drained into the rivers and sewers of Basra, polluting even further the city's water supplies. This at least, is the opinion of Basra's cancer surgeons. The implication is terrifying: For the first time since the bombing of Hiroshima, cancer has been linked to warfare.

No wonder, then, that no one really wants to find out the cause of this sickness. The American veterans' groups have accused the U.S. Defence Department of "a deliberate attempt to avoid responsibility for consciously allowing the widespread exposure of hundreds of thousands of servicemen and women." The Ministry of Defence in London, investigating depleted uranium as part of a Gulf War Syndrome inquiry, still claims that there is no evidence of the metal being responsible for any abnormal diseases.

Western aid agencies inside Iraq are equally cavalier. UNICEF has sought no details of

child cancer deaths linked to the war — though it admits to hearing of the reports. Even more shameful is our own failure — that of the U.N. and all those involved in sanctions imposition — to provide enough of the medicines that could cure Iraqi child leukaemia victims who are otherwise going to die. To deny the existence of Gulf War Syndrome may be sin enough. To deny medicine to its Iraqi civilian victims is shameful.

There is an obvious response to this. Why should we — the British, the Americans, the West — do anything when we do not know for sure what is blighting the people of southern Iraq, as well as our own military veterans? Saddam is to blame — write that out 100 times. But there is an equally obvious retort: Open a U.N. investigation into the pestilence that is sweeping through those who fought in 1991 and those who live there now but who were unborn at the time. U.N. inspectors inside Iraq can paw through the palaces and offices of the highest Iraqi officials in their hunt for evidence of bio-chemical warfare. So why cannot the U.N. carry out an equally intrusive — equally humanitarian — inquiry into the cancers, kidney failures and deaths that accompanied the creation of the New World Order?

— The Independent

Beware of the EU bearing gifts

Martin Walker

WHEN THE president of the United States wants to make a forceful point, aircraft carriers start to move. When the European Union (EU) wants to assert itself, it offers a trade deal. This may be a more civilised way of doing things. But the EU is going to have to learn that its diplomacy by trade pact is subject to exactly the same rules as the aircraft carriers. They must be the expression of a coherent political will.

The EU recently offered two juicy trade deals, one to the U.S. and the other to Turkey. Neither one is what it seems, because neither had the backing of all 15 member states. Sir Leon Brinlan, the EU trade commissioner, offered "A New Transatlantic Marketplace" to the U.S. without taking the elementary precaution of ensuring that the entire European Commission, let alone the member states in the Council of Ministers, was in full support of it. Both French commissioners were opposed.

At least the full commission endorsed the offer to Turkey, hoping to avoid a complete breakdown in relations with a thinly veiled appeal to the other member states to pressure Greece into lifting its blockade of the \$430 million already promised to Turkey under the long-agreed customs union.

But with the grim inevitability of a Greek tragedy, a serious crisis is approaching. The EU is scheduled to open accession negotiations with Cyprus on March 31, a move that Turkey says will force it to respond by strengthening its own links to Turkish-occupied northern Cyprus. This could mean permanent partition, and in practical terms make it impossible for the EU to absorb a part of the whole of a divided island.

Europe's carrot was the formal offer to Turkey of a status very close to EU membership. It would include a strengthened customs union, with virtual free trade in services and farm produce, a range of cooperative ventures in everything from industrial policy to telecommunications, and participation in EU programmes. But this rings hollow while Greece blocks the customs union funds, and while Athens and Ankara both play

at brinkmanship over Cyprus.

"The EU is committed to the process of broadening and deepening our relations with Turkey," the EU's foreign affairs commissioner, Hans van den Broek, said recently. "We need to find solutions in the Council of Ministers to the problem of the customs union funds. It is urgent that the Council adopts as soon as possible the financial regulation of the special action concerning Turkey."

Under EU etiquette, the Commission cannot bring itself to call a spade a spade and name Greece as the immediate problem. But lurking behind Greece's objections lie other obstacles. There is Germany's reluctance to say that an accession process is under way that could eventually allow free movement of Turks into Germany, to join the 2 million already there. And there was the provocative remark by the Luxembourg prime minister, Jean-Claude Juncker, at the Luxembourg summit last December when he hosted the EU summit, that he did not care "to sit at the same Eurotable as Turkish tourists."

As well as the "new European strategy" for Turkey, the Commission also approved recently the text of the second annual report to the European Parliament on relations with Turkey. A factual rather than a policy document, this highlighted another of the most vexed issues, Turkey's human rights record.

"In regard to the situation concerning the rights of man and the democratisation process, the commission finds that the programme of the Turkish government has so far had no discernible effect," the report said.

Sir Leon's plan for a new transatlantic marketplace would scrap all remaining tariffs on goods, agree common regulations and liberalise services between the U.S. and the EU, and add \$198 billion to U.S.-European trade. The proposal, which has received a preliminary welcome in Washington after long discussions with the Clinton administration and with both sides in the U.S. Congress, is being sold by Sir Leon as a way "to enhance the broader political relationship between the U.S. and the European Union."

Although the scheme contains no explicit reference to the new single currency, it looks to a future dominated by the dollar and the euro, from the two economic systems which between them account for two-thirds of world trade and more than half of the planet's GDP. After several years of fruitless discussions about a Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Area, the marketplace proposal is being launched now because the Asian financial crisis has revealed the limitations of the Clinton administration's early infatuation with the Pacific Rim.

The plan is highly ambitious, with the EU recognising that freedom of services will also require some liberalisation of visa and work permit regimes, so that providers of services will be able to work freely in both the U.S. and Europe.

The key provisions of the scheme envisage: — a free trade area in services; — a commitment to end all tariffs on goods by 2010; — further liberalisation, aiming at a free trade area, of government procurement, intellectual property and investment; — scrapping of technical and non-tariff barriers to trade through an extensive process of mutual recognition of technical and safety standards and of consumer safeguards.

The plan deliberately excludes the most contentious issues of transatlantic trade — agricultural goods and audio-visual services, the areas on which earlier proposals to forge a U.S.-EU free trade area broke down. But this was not enough to mollify the suspicious French, who muttered that this was a doomed "Titanic project." They claim that World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules would, in effect, require Europe to offer the same free access to all other WTO members, with scant chance of imposing social, environmental or competition rules.

Sir Leon may squeeze the plan past the commission, but the Council of Ministers lies in wait. It would be unwise, therefore, to assume that either of the EU's grandiose trade deals will just as well that the EU commands no aircraft carriers.

— The Guardian

Kurd officials arrested in Iran for spying

TEHRAN (AFP) — Several officials of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), one of the two main factions in northern Iraq, have been arrested in Iran on charges of spying for Turkey and Israel, newspapers reported Monday.

Among those seized is Sabri Sarvish, a senior aide to KDP leader Massoud Barzani, they said, quoting intelligence officials.

But another leader of the "spying ring" managed to escape into northern Iraq. He was identified as Khalil Khoshnav, the KDP representative in Orumieh, the main town in West Azerbaijan province, bordering Turkey.

Mr. Khoshnav led espionage activities in favour of Ankara, the papers charged without saying where and when the arrests took place or how many were picked up.

They said all those arrested had confessed to spying for Israel and Turkey. The suspects also "spread false news in a bid to destroy relations between Iran and Turkey," the papers added.

Relations have been sour between Iran and the KDP as the KDP accuses the Islamic republic of backing the rival Kurdish faction in northern Iraq, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

In September 1996, Mr. Barzani accused Iran of aiding a counter-offensive by PUK forces after KDP forces seized control of much of Iraqi Kurdistan with the help of Iraqi troops.

Tehran is also critical of the KDP for its alliance with the Turkish army in its repeated incursions into northern Iraq to pursue its own Kurdish rebels, often at the expense of the PUK.

In November, Iran's Revolutionary Guards commander, Rahim Safavi, accused Israel of deploying listening devices in Turkey near the Iranian and Syrian borders.

He also accused Turkey of paving the way for Israeli and American forces in northern Iraq under the pretext of cracking down on the PUK.

Regent, Cook urge Israel to take 'confidence-building measures'

(Continued from page 1)

self-rule areas today, said.

Mr. Cook said that the EU has taken a renewed initiative to try to restore the momentum of the peace process.

"Ten days ago I set out the six steps which we believe must be taken to restore confidence, trust and the sense of progress to the Middle East peace process," he said.

"It is very important to restore new life to the peace process and also restore confidence. Now we will shortly be hearing the American initiative and proposals to the peace process," the British official said.

"Europe is the major financial banker of the peace process, it provides twice as much funds as the United States does in supporting the peace process," the minister said.

"I now want to make sure that those funds clearly targeted in removing the obstacles to the interim steps of the peace process, par-

ticularly the Gaza airport and sea port, and Gaza industrial estate," said the minister who will also visit Syria and Lebanon during his Middle East tour.

"I also managed to get through the EU that the aid which EU provides to the peace process will be extended beyond this year when it otherwise has expired," he said.

He said that the EU was in close contacts with the United States "from whom we soon expect an initiative."

Prince Hassan said that Jordan supports an EU proposal to hold a conference to discuss the distribution of humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people.

Mr. Cook said that he and the Regent have raised the issue of Iraq where he informed him about a British proposal to hold a conference in London to discuss the distribution of humanitarian aid to Iraq.

Cook denounces Israel's expansion of settlements

(Continued from page 1)

Abu Ghneim, known as Har Homa to Israelis, in Arab east Jerusalem, which Palestinians want as the capital of a future state.

Israel and Britain agreed on Monday that Mr. Cook would visit a controversial Jewish settlement project in Arab east Jerusalem accompanied by an Israeli, not Palestinian, delegation.

"He's going to visit now, accompanied by Israeli officials, probably by a representative of the government and a representative of the Jerusalem municipality," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's aide David Bar-Ilan told Reuters.

Mr. Cook's plan to visit Jabal Abu Ghneim during his upcoming visit to Israel has been criticised by the Israeli government, which was preparing a cool reception for him over what it considers his pro-Palestinian agenda for breaking the deadlock in the peace process.

"Our position on settlement extension is very clear — settlement expansion is wrong and unhealthy to the peace process," Mr. Cook said Monday.

"My visit to Har Homa is part of my visit to the Palestinian territories," he said. "I will view Har Homa from land which is under the control of the Palestinian Authority."

"[The Israelis] have known for some weeks that I intend to visit Har Homa. I'm anxious to see Har Homa for myself. It is in the interest of both parties including the government of Israel that I'm informed by seeing the situation for myself."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday rejected any European "meddling" on the issue of Jerusalem.

"Europe and especially Britain can play an important role in advancing the peace process but not by meddling in the Jerusalem issue," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Mr. Cook is waging a political offensive which can only irritate us," added Mr. Bar-Ilan.

"The European Union can hardly play a more active role in the peace process by adopting almost systematically the Palestinians' positions," he said.

The British diplomat flies into Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport and then heads immediately to Gaza City for a meeting with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

He is then scheduled to accompany Mr. Arafat to the proposed site for a deepwater port in Gaza, a project called for in the Oslo peace accords but blocked by Mr. Netanyahu's government for security reasons.

Earlier on Monday, Israeli police said vandals had painted slogans calling Mr. Cook an anti-Semite on walls of the British consulate in Jerusalem.

"Robin Cook is an anti-Semite," and "Robin Cook

go home" as well as "Har Homa is Jewish forever" were written on the walls of the consulate branch in west Jerusalem, police said.

The British consulate said in a statement it "regretted that some people have to express themselves that way especially since the purpose of Mr. Cook's visit is to advance the peace process."

Palestinian-Israeli negotiations have been deadlocked since Israel began building the settlement in occupied Arab east Jerusalem a year ago.

Mr. Hussein criticised Israel's opposition to the Abu Ghneim visit and said it was trying to undermine British peace efforts.

"Israel is trying to place obstacles before a British role and is trying to belittle the importance of the British role in the peace process," Mr. Hussein told Reuters.

Sharon's threats 'rude, irresponsible' — Ensour

(Continued from page 1)

weakness haunting the enemy and are a cheap attempt to raise the morale of the Israeli Mossad which is swimming in a pool of failures and mistakes," Mr. Misha'al said.

"We call on the Arabs, the Muslim and the international community to take a stand against state terrorism practised by the Zionist government," Mr. Misha'al said.

Mr. Sharon, who visited Jordan earlier this month to discuss bilateral development projects, helped secure the release of the two Mossad agents captured in the bungled bid to kill Mr. Misha'al in Amman.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ensour indirectly criticised recent anti-Jordanian statements made by Syrian Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam at a meeting of Arab health ministers in Damascus earlier in March.

Mr. Khaddam reportedly mocked Jordan's peace policies with Israel and insinuated that the Jewish state would eventually "occupy" the Kingdom and push Palestinians to settle in Jordan.

"Suppose that I was in a meeting with Arab ministers and started lashing out at Syria, would they accept such things?" Dr. Ensour said. "Is it something good?" Jordanian-Syrian ties have

been tense since Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994.

"The time when Arab officials used to engage in a war of words through media platforms has gone," Dr. Ensour said. "We have to look for factors that bring us together, not factors that take us apart," he added.

"We have no answer to his comments," Dr. Ensour said. "We respect our brothers in Syria but we will never accept any harm to a brotherly state whatever the pretext is."

"If the statements that were attributed to him are correct, then we leave it to the others to judge his words."

A citizen's right to land in Israel is questioned when an Arab claims that right

By Serge Schmemmann

KATSIR, Israel — Three years ago, Adel Kaadan saw an ad in the paper for lots on this hilltop near his village. The views was spectacular, the infrastructure modern, the school good and the price right.

So he came and asked for an application to join the cooperative. The clerk hemmed and hawed, and finally said no. No Arabs.

"It was a slap in the face," said Mr. Kaadan, one of about a million Arabs who live in Israel proper and hold Israeli citizenship, out of a total population of 5.8 million. "It was an earthquake for me. I work in a military hospital. They let me save their lives, but to live next to them, no."

So Mr. Kaadan sued, posing what Israel's chief justice described in February as one of the toughest decisions he has ever faced.

On the surface, the case does not seem so wrenching. The community of Katsir is neither particularly religious nor nationalistic. Mr. Kaadan is hardly a radical or a revolutionary; he speaks fluent Hebrew, and many residents here know him from the hospital.

His quest, however, touches the very heart of the unresolved conflict in Israel's claim to be both a democracy and a Jewish state.

The issue arises repeatedly in the disputes among Jews over religious versus civil rights, but it has never been fully tested on the fundamental question of a citizen's right to land.

"This is one of the most difficult and complex judicial decisions that I have ever come across," the president of the Israeli Supreme Court, Aharon Barak, declared at a hearing Feb. 10 pleading with both sides to find a compromise and not to push for a ruling. "We are not ready yet for this sort of judicial decision, which has unforeseen consequences," he said. "I suggest that you reach a compromise and avoid a judicial decision, since it is hard to know which way it will go."

Alexander Kedar, a specialist in property law at the Haifa University Law School, said: "Whatever way it will go, I think this is one of the most important cases we've had, and the court is aware of this. The court is definitely facing a very hard decision, especially since it's not clear what the public reaction will be to this extremely sensitive topic. It's really a question of whether Israel is more democratic or more Jewish."

The case also comes as many Jews in Israel and abroad fervently defend the right of Jews to settle in Arab neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem and in the West Bank, though the legal issues are different. These instances have provoked much denunciation of Palestinian laws against selling land to Jews. They have been described as akin to Nazi Germany's "Nuremberg laws," which restricted the Jews' rights to property, among other things.

Dressed in his hospital whites, Mr. Kaadan chattered cheerily in Hebrew while two daughters, 7 and 6, romped on the sunny hillside, and his wife sat in the car nursing a third, 3 months old. He hardly gave the impression of a standard-bearer for civil rights, let alone an Arab revolutionary. He said that he had worked side by side with Jews for 23 years as a medical assistant at an Israeli hospital, where he had many Israeli friends, and that he had no problem with the idea of his daughters' attending Jewish schools.

He insisted that he was simply in search of a better quality of life. Arab communities like his hometown Baka Al Gharbia, he said, lagged far behind Jewish towns in services and schools.

"In Baka," he said, "there is no infrastructure, no sewer lines. The schools are full of asbestos, the road to school is unpaved, the teachers are bad."

Mr. Kaadan's suit was filed in September 1995 by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel. Lawyers with the association said that although there had been previous suits chal-



Adel Kaadan, an Arab Israeli barred from joining the Katsir cooperative, has sued, prompting an appeal from the high court for a compromise to avoid a judicial decision (New York Times photo)

lenging land laws and practices, they had been narrow in scope. This is the first one challenging the right of a community to exclude a person from living there because he is an Arab.

Mr. Kaadan sued not to buy property but to lease it. In Israel, 93 per cent of the land is owned by the state or by one of two agencies, the Development Authority and the Jewish National Fund. They in turn lease it to other agencies or developers.

In many towns, like Katsir, land is leased to the Jewish Agency, an international, non-governmental body set up in the 1920s to settle Jews from around the world in what is now

said, "but Katsir is just a suburb. They all work in Hadera, and only sleep there. There's no reason to exclude Arabs from living with Jews."

Matty Bloch, a founding member of the Katsir cooperative and the town clerk, argued that Katsir was still in the process of forming an identity as a community and that it had enough problems already trying to integrate 700 Jewish families from different backgrounds — European, North African, Russian, Ethiopian, Middle Eastern — without introducing an Arab.

"All community life here is based on Jewish traditions, holidays, memorial days," Mr. Bloch said. "We go to the army together, we carry weapons because our houses are close to the border. Maybe we can live together with Arabs one day, but for sure not in a very small community which has its own integration problems."

Mr. Kaadan has heard their concerns on this point. "Yes, they asked me, 'how will you celebrate Independence Day? What will you do on Yom Kippur?'" he said. "I said, 'on Independence Day, I'll do the same as I always do, have a nice holiday. And on Yom Kippur — when Judaism prescribes a strict fast — 'I'll do like secular Jews. I'll eat at home and not on the street.'"

The argument that Katsir is not ready for integration is one that Mr. Yakir and Mr. Kedar do not accept. "We think the case is right in this jubilee year," said Mr. Yakir, referring to Israel's 50th anniversary. "It represents the unfulfilled promise of the declaration of independence. If it's not ripe now, I don't think it will be ripe by the centennial."

As Mr. Kedar put it: "I must say that as a Jew in Israel, I think that if a Jew somewhere else in the world was prohibited from buying state land, public land owned by the federal government, because they're Jews, I believe there would have been an outcry in Israel. I support the civil rights organisation in their appeal. The Supreme Court has to take a courageous step and become the Warren Court, and really transform this into a Brown vs. Board of Education."

His reference was to the landmark 1954 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court rejecting the basic principle of segregation, "separate but equal," in education for black Americans.

This article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune

Rajub threatens settlers with death, stops security cooperation in Hebron

(Continued from page 1)

gunshots were fired at the Jewish enclave from the area. But Col. Rajub denounced their attack as "a provocation aimed at sparking a massacre of Palestinians."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued an angry complaint to the Palestinian National Authority over the shooting, which caused no casualties.

But he and Israeli army officials also criticised the settlers' action as a dangerous provocation. Israeli police have issued summons for 15 settlers for

questioning in connection with the affair.

During a cabinet meeting on Sunday, the head of Israel's army, General Amnon Shahak, responded angrily to charges by right-wing ministers and settlers that his troops were not doing enough to protect the 420 Jewish militants who live in the Hebron settlement.

"Soldiers who are sent to Hebron arrive with sympathy for the settlers but their feelings are very different when they leave," Gen. Shahak said, referring to frequent acts of provocation by the Jewish community in the city.

Under the Oslo autonomy agreements, Israel withdrew from 80 per cent of Hebron, a city of 120,000 Arabs, in January 1996.

But around 1,000 Israeli soldiers still guard the Jewish settlement, which includes the Cave of the Patriarchs, a site holy to both Muslims and Jews.

Tensions between the two communities flare regularly. In February 1994, a Jewish settler killed 29 Muslim worshippers at the Cave of the Patriarchs, known to Muslims as Ibrahim Mosque.

Sandstorm leaves 5 dead in Egypt

(Continued from page 1)

and shut down operations at the ports of Suez and Port Said. Egyptian officials said.

A plane carrying British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook to Cairo was diverted to Cyprus on Sunday evening because of the storm while other flights to Cairo were forced to land in Red Sea resort airports and southern Egypt.

A plane coming from New York with a stopover in Cairo on its way to Jordan with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Sahhaf was diverted to the south Sinai resort of Sharm Al Sheikh late Sunday.

Departures from Cairo airport

were also affected. The Cairo football team Zamalek was waiting at the airport to catch a flight for Nairobi.

Port Said, the northern entrance to the Suez Canal, and Suez, the southern gateway, were shut down on Sunday. Port Said reopened on Monday but the southern entrance to the canal remained paralysed, port officials said.

Many roads linking major cities across Egypt were still closed Monday as poor visibility continued, notably in desert areas, while municipal workers cleared streets in Cairo covered with broken trees and overturned road signs.

Egypt is often plagued by

"khamseen" (fifty in Arabic) sandstorms in spring which can last up to 50 days.

In Israel, the low visibility caused by the storm led to traffic backups around the country and forced the civil aviation authority to cancel all domestic flights, officials said.

International flights in and out of Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport and the airport at the Red Sea resort of Eilat were unaffected by the storm.

In Jordan, the poor visibility caused by the storm caused extended delays in departures and arrivals at Queen Alia International Airport and the Amman civil airport, officials said.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Central Bank reportedly will allow few banks to distribute dividends

** ACCORDING TO informed financial and banking sources, the Central Bank will only allow few banks to distribute dividends to shareholders. The Arab Bank, the Housing Bank and the Industrial Development Bank are said to have been allowed to distribute dividends.

Sources said the Central Bank, after examining the balance sheets of Jordanian banks, has asked most of them to transfer 1997 profits to reserves and allocations to cover doubtful credits and other obligations and shield them from any crises in the future.

The step will safeguard the Jordanian banking system and the rights of shareholders and depositors and will maintain stability in this sector, said officials. The Central Bank has demanded that all Jordanian banks raise their capital to at least JD20 million before the end of 1997.

Some banks raised their capital to more than JD20 million, and the Arab Bank is expected to raise its capital to JD88 million before the end of this month. The Arab Bank and the Industrial Development Bank will be allowed to distribute dividends at a rate of 40 per cent and 15 per cent respectively (Al Dostour).

IFC joins the Housing Bank Group

** UNDER AN agreement signed recently, the Housing Bank became a strategic partner to the International Financial Centre Company (IFC). Daoud Kishta, IFC general manager said: "By this partnership IFC will become the investment arm of the Housing Bank. IFC will manage the Housing Bank's stock investment portfolio, which is one of the largest at the Amman Financial Market, as well as the investment portfolios of its subsidiaries, affiliates and clients in Jordan and abroad. IFC will make full cooperation with Palestine Securities Co. which is one of the Housing Bank affiliates in Palestine."

"By virtue of this partnership, IFC has become fully qualified to carry out all activities covered by the new securities law, such as brokerage, underwriting new issues, portfolio and fund management," Mr. Kishta added.

Because of financially unfeasible journeys

JETT, Alpha stop tourist bus service to Petra

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Tourists arriving in Jordan this month have been taken back as the country's only two tourist transport operators have stopped their daily service to Petra.

Alpha, which commenced operations in 1995, notified travel agents about one week ago that it would end its daily service to Jordan's number one tourist destination as of March 12, and travel agents have also reported that the country's oldest transport provider, Jordan Express Tourist Transport Company (JETT) also has suspended its service, without warning, until further notice.

JETT officials denied that the company had stopped its daily service, but an American tourist Sunday complained to the Jordan Times that she was refused a reservation and told that there were no buses.

The Jordan Times both Sunday and Monday phoned JETT offices to enquire about reservations, and on both occasions were told, "Sorry, but there are no buses travelling to Petra."

JETT manager Malek Haddad later retracted the denial and said that he expected to resume the service in early April as the tourism high season gets under-way in the country.

This is the first time that JETT has stopped its scheduled daily tours to Petra and has claimed that the scant number of passengers has made the journey financially unfeasible.

"We have really been losing," Mr. Haddad said.

Izzeddine Abu Rumi, managing director of a transport cooperative to which JETT belongs, said that over the past few weeks the number of tourists travelling to Petra in the famous blue buses have been as few as two or three each day.

"This does not cover our costs for operating a bus to Petra," he told the Jordan Times. "To operate a small bus, it costs about JD200 and to operate one of the bigger ones, it takes about JD580."

Round trip tickets from Amman sell for JD11 and a round trip ticket including lunch and a guide in the ancient city costs JD32, he said.

"We need at least ten people to justify a trip," he added.

Travel agents, particularly those affiliated with major hotels, have been caught in

an embarrassing situation with clients as a result of the cancellation of the transport line.

"We don't do group tours that much," says a manager of a travel agency at one of Amman's five star hotels. "We are here for the independent tourist or businessperson who is travelling in his spare time."

"But how should I tell someone that they can't get a bus to Petra — the reason people come to Jordan?" he asked.

Another said tourists who arrive expecting to find a daily service to the rose-red city — as advertised in almost all promotional material on Jordan — are put off when they are told they will have to rent a taxi.

"The taxi alone takes JD55, so it pushes the price up considerably when you consider that once you get to Petra, you have to pay JD20 entrance fee and buy lunch and a horse" the agent points out.

JETT reservation staff is advising tourists to take a service car or a public bus from the Wihdat station.

"Could you imagine sending a foreigner to Petra on an uncomfortable bus with no air conditioning or other services or even sending a

woman by herself on a public bus or in a service car?" she says. "This is simply an unacceptable way to treat tourists."

"It's true that they may be losing money, but we have to show that Jordan is committed to its tourists," she stressed.

One agent said that agents affected by the decision are considering lobbying JETT to provide service at least one or two days a week.

"This way, maybe we, as agents, could organise enough individual tourists to travel on the same day," he said. "This is the worst time to stop. We are gearing up for high season, which is maybe a week away."

This scenario couldn't be more contrary to Jordan's nascent tourism boom in 1995 following the signing of a tourism agreement between Jordan and Israel.

Tourists flocked to Jordan in numbers so great that government-owned JETT, which at that time enjoyed a monopoly, could not meet demand and the Ministry of Tourism had to hire buses from neighbouring countries to cater to burgeoning demand.

The pressure on tourism infrastructure forced the government to break the JETT monopoly.

Alpha soon commenced its operations along with a third company, Petra. As regional political tension began to rise again, the three companies found that the number of buses exceeded demand. According to a source in the industry, the three together had 270 buses, while demand required only 180, consequently resulting in a price war.

Last fall, the three entered into a joint operation — which travel agents have called a return to monopoly — with 80 buses. However, sources from within both JETT and Alpha have said that even the joint operation, which intended to "spread the wealth" has not alleviated the poor performance of the companies.

"You can attribute it to the regional situation," said one source. "The last crisis with Iraq really hurt us and now the situation in the West Bank isn't good. There have been many things."

He added that Alpha, which was established exclusively to cater to the tourism industry, is no longer doing daily tours to any part of Jordan and is only accepting group tours and reservations for Al Haj and Umra.

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 16/03/98 19:06									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	DMG	DMG
US Dollar	1.0000	1.9360	0.7564	1.4536	106.49	1936.00	6.5595	1.9360	1.9360
DE Mark	0.5182	1.0000	0.4936	0.9375	193.60	193.60	3.3757	1.0000	1.0000
GB Sterling	1.3548	1.3548	1.0000	1.2500	157.48	157.48	1.6264	1.3548	1.3548
CH Franc	0.6757	1.2295	0.4936	1.0000	136.03	136.03	1.6264	1.2295	1.2295
JP Yen	0.0094	1.1041	0.4936	1.1414	1.0000	1.0000	1.6264	1.1041	1.1041
CA Dollar	0.7076	1.2903	0.4936	1.0488	1.09	1.09	1.6264	1.2903	1.2903
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0162	0.3347	0.0826	1386.04	0.7890	1.6264	1.0162	1.0162
NL Guilder	0.4875	0.8773	0.2924	0.7212	83.10	0.8884	1.6264	0.8773	0.8773
FR Franc	0.1638	0.2982	0.0983	0.2424	21.21	0.2315	1.6264	0.2982	0.2982

Middle Eastern Currencies									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	DMG	DMG
US Dollar	1.0000	1.9360	0.7564	1.4536	106.49	1936.00	6.5595	1.9360	1.9360
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	2.7800	1.0357	2.1774	235.43	4788.55	1.4104	2.7800	2.7800
Saudi Riyal	0.2688	0.5200	0.1936	0.4375	47.88	957.71	0.2688	0.5200	0.5200
Bahrain Dinar	2.86	5.5968	2.0893	4.7875	514.90	10298.00	2.86	5.5968	5.5968
Qatar Dinar	0.2724	0.5324	0.1936	0.4375	47.88	957.71	0.2724	0.5324	0.5324
Kuwait Dinar	3.2774	6.3936	2.3891	5.3938	582.03	11640.60	3.2774	6.3936	6.3936
UAE Dirham	0.2723	0.5324	0.1936	0.4375	47.88	957.71	0.2723	0.5324	0.5324
Emirates Dirham	0.85	1.6536	0.6164	1.3875	148.88	2977.60	0.85	1.6536	1.6536
Egyptian Pound	0.2441	0.4808	0.1801	0.4075	42.87	857.40	0.2441	0.4808	0.4808

Energy									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	DMG	DMG
Brent	12.15	23.70	8.93	20.00	2157.48	42885.55	12.15	23.70	23.70
WTI	11.83	23.15	8.65	19.50	2107.48	42385.55	11.83	23.15	23.15
Bonny	12.15	23.70	8.93	20.00	2157.48	42885.55	12.15	23.70	23.70
Dubai	10.71	20.85	7.71	17.50	1857.48	37145.55	10.71	20.85	20.85
UL Gas	135.00	261.00	97.50	217.50	23074.80	461496.00	135.00	261.00	261.00

Mid-East Currencies									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	DMG	DMG
SA Riyal	0.2688	0.5200	0.1936	0.4375	47.88	957.71	0.2688	0.5200	0.5200
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.5324	0.1936	0.4375	47.88	957.71	0.2723	0.5324	0.5324
KW Dinar	3.2774	6.3936	2.3891	5.3938	582.03	11640.60	3.2774	6.3936	6.3936
BH Dinar	0.3770	0.7340	0.2773	0.6164	65.77	1315.40	0.3770	0.7340	0.7340
CY Pound	1.8785	3.6570	1.3785	3.0775	327.73	6554.60	1.8785	3.6570	3.6570

Currency Deposit Rates (B/L)									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	DMG	DMG
USD	5.55	5.55	5.55	5.55	5.55	5.55	5.55	5.55	5.55
GBP	7.41	7.40	7.41	7.41	7.41	7.41	7.41	7.41	7.41
JPY	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82
DEM	3.46	3.40	3.47	3.87	3.74	3.74	3.87	3.46	3.46
FRF	3.83	3.85	3.82	3.86	3.87	3.87	3.86	3.83	3.83
CHF	1.19	1.16	1.25	1.16	1.38	1.38	1.16	1.19	1.19
ITL	5.84	5.59	5.07	4.82	4.85	4.85	5.07	5.84	5.84

Main Equity Indices									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	DMG	DMG
New York	8648.35	16848.35	6283.50	14283.50	1502.02	30042.82	8648.35	16848.35	16848.35
London	1075.49	2095.49	768.04	1778.04	186.81	3736.81	1075.49	2095.49	2095.49
Tokyo	1075.49	2095.49	768.04	1778.04	186.81	3736.81	1075.49	2095.49	2095.49
Paris	16881.54	32763.08	1198.17	27662.54	5678.23	11356.46	16881.54	32763.08	32763.08
Frankfurt	3687.25	7274.50	267.02	616.04	64.23	1284.46	3687.25	7274.50	7274.50
DAX	4883.85	9767.70	358.12	820.45	85.13	1702.85	4883.85	9767.70	9767.70

Energy									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	DMG	DMG
Coffee (lb/50)	153.25	300.00	110.00	247.50	2617.50	52350.00	153.25	300.00	300.00
Cocoa (lb/50)	1680	3280.00	1180.00	2660.00	28160.00	56320.00	1680	3280.00	3280.00
Sugar (lb/50)	286	562.00	206.00	462.00	4912.00	10024.00	286	562.00	562.00
Wheat (lb/50)	87	174.00	63.00	141.00	1497.00	3094.00	87	174.00	174.00
Soya (lb/50)	27.15	53.70	19.50	43.75	4612.50	9225.00	27.15	53.70	53.70
Tea (lb/50)	155	300.00	110.00	247.50	2617.50	52350.00	155	300.00	300.00
Barley (lb/50)	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Rice (lb/50)	400	800.00	290.00	650.00	6880.00	13760.00	400	800.00	800.00

JOD Cross Rates									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	DMG	DMG
US Dollar	0.708	1.376	0.512	1.168	123.52	2470.40	0.708	1.376	1.376
GB Sterling	1.1806	2.304	1.000	2.250	235.43	4708.60	1.1806	2.304	2.304
DE Mark	0.3884	0.767	0.277	0.616	65.77	1315.40	0.3884	0.767	0.767
CH Franc	0.4782	0.936	0.345	0.769	80.97	1619.40	0.4782	0.936	0.936
FR Franc	0.1198	0.239	0.088	0.195	20.57	4114.00	0.1198	0.239	0.239
JP Yen	0.0047	0.009	0.003	0.007	0.73	14.66	0.0047	0.009	0.009
NL Guilder	0.3446	0.689	0.255	0.578	60.77	1215.40	0.3446	0.689	0.689
IT Lira	0.3942	0.788	0.288	0.642	67.37	1347.40	0.3942	0.788	0.788

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET									
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 16/03/1998									
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	COMPANY'S NAME	P/E	DIV. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
2,340	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	4.2	0.00	14	19865	34420	1.75	1.71	04-
3,540	JOR. POSTAL BK.	4.2	0.00	2	1850	2426	1.34	1.34	-
2,680	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	6.07	10	17250	29663	1.73	1.72	01-
5,300	THE HOUSING BK.	29.6	1.96	4	1153	5700	4.98	4.95	03-
4,180	JOR. KORTAJI BK.	9	0.00	4	7700	14031	1.90	1.89	01-
920	JOR. GULF BANK	4.0	10.45	8	6650	4590	0.68	0.67	01-
4,020	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.0	4.90	12	12359	24784	2.02	1.96	06-
1,460	SEIT-AL-HAL (SEITHA)	6	16.67	9	2500	2227	0.90	0.90	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 235.05 %CHG: -0.24 73 69517 118496									
2,350	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.8	4.43	1	100	205	2.05	2.05	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 121.79 %CHG: 0.00 1 100 205									
2,140	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.7	4.98	16	4147	8353	2.02	2.01	01-
4,030	JORD. ELECTRICITY	12.7	5.37	2	150	321	2.14	2.14	-
5,330	MINERALS	60.2	0.00	1	2500	13780	5.33	5.50	17+
7,350	NATL. PORTFOLIO	41.9	0.00	11	16580	16988	1.08	1.05	04-
9,350	ALRAI	9.5	6.45	2	1250	11683	9.35	9.30	05-
7,100	AD-DUSTOUR	25.1	3.51	2	1025	6816	7.00	6.65	35-
1,090	ZARCA EDUCATION	9	0.00	2	1150	1081	0.96	0.94	0



Marcelo Rios of Chile celebrates beating Briton Greg Rusedski to win the Newsweek Champions Cup in Indian Wells, California. Rios won 6-3 6-7 (15-17) 7-6 (7-4) 6-4 (Reuters photo)

Champions Cup Rios downs Rusedski to climb to 3rd

INDIAN WELLS, California. (AFP) — Marcelo Rios subdued Britain's Greg Rusedski in four sets here Sunday to lift the ATP Tour Champions Cup, a victory that will boost him to No. 3 in the world rankings.

Rios, the seventh seed from Chile, fired a backhand cross-court winner on his first match point to complete a 6-3, 6-7 (15/17), 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 victory in two hours and 46 minutes.

Rusedski, who reached the final of the \$2.45 million tournament with a dominant serving performance against Thomas Muster on Saturday, dropped his serve in the penultimate game with a double-fault on break point.

That was the first break of serve since the second game of the first set, when Rusedski was also broken. Rios, runner-up to Petr Korda in the Australian Open in January, said his game plan against Rusedski, who blasted a record 149 mph ace past Muster on Saturday, was simple.

"I knew he was going to serve big," Rios said. "I would not have many break points. I would have to hold my serve."

And he did. After Rusedski won the toss and chose to receive, he had two break points against the Chilean in the opening game.

He failed to convert them, and worse, dropped his serve to love in the next game to find himself trailing 0-3.

That was the only break Rios needed to take the first set.

The second-set tiebreaker turned into a marathon affair. Rusedski finally won it with a forehand first vol-



Britain's Greg Rusedski returns against Marcelo Rios during the Newsweek Champions Cup Finals, March 15 in Indian Wells, California. Rusedski is ranked sixth (Reuters photo)

ley on his seventh set point. Rios had five set points in the decider, the longest on the ATP Tour this year.

"It was a great tiebreaker in the second set," Rusedski said. "I had a few chances to win it. I managed to turn around the match and get back in. I think the third set was probably key, that tiebreaker."

"If I could have taken that, maybe the momentum might have changed."

In the third-set tiebreaker, Rios reeled off the last four points to put himself firmly in control.

"I think it's a great win," Rios said. "He's a good hardcourt player, and I beat him in the final of a Super Nine. That says I'm playing pretty good."

Rios, who started the week ranked seventh in the world, said his year so far, including a tournament win in Auckland, his run to the final in Australia and now, his move to No. 3, had improved his confidence and his motivation.

"I think it's a big step in my career," he said. "Really you see that you can be

even No. 1 if you play good."

"One year ago I was 20, now I'm three, so you realize you can do a lot better."

"You get more energy to keep on going, try to be better each day."

Rios said one of the biggest changes in his attitude was a new ability to fight back when he is down.

"I think I'm growing in the game," he said. "I'm being more smart, more focused every match."

He said coach Larry Stefanki, who won this tournament in 1985, had helped him with his mental toughness.

"He helped me a lot in my mind," Rios said. "To try to play hard, even if you're losing, try not to give up. To try hard every set and every game."

Rios, who hadn't dropped a set this week until the final, said even the world No. 1 ranking was within his reach.

"I think I have a lot of chances now come the clay season," he said. "We have a lot of tournaments on clay. I think I can do pretty good."

Gascoigne omission raises World Cup doubts

LONDON (AFP) — Paul Gascoigne on Monday was left out of the England squad for next week's World Cup warm-up with Switzerland in Bern, prompting doubts about his participation in this summer's World Cup finals.

The 30-year-old Rangers' midfielder has been dropped because of concerns over his fitness.

Meanwhile, Hoddle has given first England calls to Sheffield Wednesday goalkeeper Kevin Pressman and Arsenal midfielder Ray Parlour.

Parlour's former Highbury team-mate Merson, now with Middlesbrough was also recalled while West Ham's talented young defender Rio Ferdinand is back in a senior squad.

But it is the absence of Gascoigne that will capture all the attention as coach Hoddle begins to hone his thinking for the summer to come.

Gascoigne's future at Rangers is open to doubts after last week's revelation that the Glasgow

giants had agreed a deal with Crystal Palace.

Gascoigne has played just one full 90 minutes for Rangers in 1998 after a series of injuries, the latest being an ankle problem that ruled him out for the weekend defeat at Motherwell.

Hoddle admitted after last month's defeat by Chile that Gascoigne gave his side what few other players could, but his absence will raise speculation that he may not make it into England's final 22 for France.

The elevation of Pressman is something the Wednesday shot stopper must have assumed would never come.

Capped at B level three years ago and again last month, Pressman is given his chance with David Seaman and Ian Walker both still ruled out by injury although Seaman is on the point of returning to the Arsenal set-up.

Parlour and Merson were both in the B side

along with Pressman against Chile last month and Merson's return in particular is well-timed.

He has revelled in the authority banded him by Middlesbrough manager Bryan Robson, responding with 15 goals this season to lead Boro's push for a return to the Premiership.

Hoddle decided against calling Liverpool midfielder Jamie Redknapp into the senior party — he will instead be one of the five over-age players on duty in the Under-21 game in Ayr 24 hours before the main game.

But the coach, who named a 26-man party must be fearing the worst from his Manchester United contingent.

Seven members of the Old Trafford squad were named in the 26 but Hoddle knows there are already injury doubts over Nicky Butt, Phil Neville and Paul Scholes.

Lightning Leeds strike down Derby

LONDON (AFP) — Leeds United boosted their chances of clinching a place in next season's UEFA Cup after storming to a 5-0 away win over in-form Derby County on Sunday.

Goals by Gunnar Halle, Lee Bowyer, Harry Kewell, Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink and an own goal by Jacob Laursen secured the emphatic win which sees George Graham's side leapfrog over Derby and Blackburn into fifth place in the Premiership.

Derby did not help their cause with some poor defending and showed their vulnerability to the counter-attack as Leeds swept out of defence with a series of lightning raids.

After eight minutes the visitors went ahead courtesy of an own goal from Laursen — though Estonian goalkeeper Marin Poom was more to blame for the bizarre opener.

Gary Kelly floated in a harmless looking free-kick which Poom should have collected, but he stayed frozen on his line and Laursen, stumbling under pressure from Alfie Hauland, deflected the ball into his own net off his heel.

Derby hit back and Republic of Ireland defender Kelly was forced to clear a header off the line from Francesco Baiano.

Derby continued to enjoy the majority of the play but they were stunned by two goals in seven minutes which put Leeds firmly in command.

The home defence was nowhere in the 35th minute when Hasselbaink's low cross found Halle who made no mistake from close range for his first goal for the club in 54 appearances since his move from Oldham in December 1996.

Moments later it became 3-0 when former England Under-21 star Lee Bowyer drilled home a low drive from 15 yards for the second of the season and his second in two games.

In the second half, Leeds continued to look menacing on the break and Halle rattled the post with a 25 yard drive before the Yorkshire side went further ahead.

Kewell played a one-two with Hasselbaink and the Australian international raced clear of the defence. Kept his composure and buried a low shot for his seventh of the season.

In the 72nd minute Leeds the rout was completed when leading scorer Hasselbaink coolly slotted a right foot shot underneath the advancing body of keeper Poom for his 16th this term.

Lens and Marseille keep up pressure

PARIS (AFP) — Lens stayed one point behind French league leaders Metz on Sunday when they hammered visiting Paris St. Germain 3-0 and third-placed Marseille also kept up the pressure with a 1-0 home win over Bastia.

Lens, who have 55 points from 29 matches to stay two points clear of Marseille, got off to a flying start when Tony Vairelles headed home from a Stephane Ziani corner after just eight minutes.

Ziani then made it 2-0 when he fired home just before half-time, and he almost scored again just after the restart but Jimmy Algerino cleared off the line.

Although Marco Simone had two chances well saved by Lens keeper Guillaume Warmuz, Lens wrapped up the match when Cameroon international midfielder Marc-Vivien Foe knocked in the killer third goal in the 73rd minute.

The win was sweet revenge for Lens who were beaten in midweek by PSG in the semi-finals of the French league cup.

Marseille, who had lost their four previous matches, recaptured the winning touch. But they needed a goal in injury time from Italian striker Fabrizio Ravanelli to see off Bastia.

Metz, who are bidding for their first-ever title, came away 1-0 winners from Montpellier Friday night thanks to a goal from Cyril Serredzsum seven minutes from time.

But reigning champions Monaco, already beaten the previous weekend at home by Lens, crashed again at Auxerre, who scored a deserved 3-1 win — Steve Marlet scoring twice and talented midfielder player Sabri Lamouchi also finding the net for the home side.

Monaco pulled one back through their international striker David Trezeguet in the 78th minute but it was too little too late.

It was just the result Auxerre needed before their UEFA Cup quarter-final return against Italian giants Lazio who will be travelling to France with only a one goal advantage after the first leg.

Bordeaux continued their success run by coming away 2-1 winners from Nantes. Strasbourg saw off visiting Rennes 3-1 and Lyon scored a 2-0 victory at Toulouse.

SCOREBOARD

NBA

Utah	109	Detroit	98
Miami	79	Orlando	76
Atlanta	93	Boston	77
LA Lakers	119	Vancouver	110
Indiana	91	New York	86
Toronto	100	Golden State	98
Phoenix	100	Dallas	90
Portland	103	LA Clippers	92

NHL

Buffalo	3	Pittsburgh	0
Chicago	8	Florida	4
Carolina	4	Edmonton	1
Anaheim	5	Colorado	3

French First Division

Lens	3	Paris St Germain	0
Marseille	1	Bastia	0

Italian Serie A

Brescia	2	AC Milan	2
Empoli	2	Fiorina	0
Lecce	1	Florentina	1
AS Roma	2	Bari	1
Piacenza	0	Udinese	2

Spanish Championship

Valladolid	1	Barcelona	2
Espanol	0	Real Sociedad	2
Zaragoza	0	Valencia	2
Merida	1	D'La Coruna	0
Celta Vigo	0	Tenerife	0
Oviedo	2	Sporting Gijon	1

Turkish League

Trabzonspor	4	Samsunspor	0
Kayserispor	0	Sekerspor	1
Antalyaspor	4	Karabokspor	0
Alay	0	Gaziantepspor	0
Bursaspor	6	Vanspor	0
Kocaelispor	3	C. Dardanel	1
Galatasaray	3	Genclerbirligi	1

Bundesliga

Cologne	0	Hansa Rostock	0
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Portuguese League

Belenenses	0	Campomaiorense	1
E. Amadora	1	Academica	0
Maritimo	1	Sporting Braga	1
Salgueiros	4	Farense	1
Leca	1	Setubal	3
Benfica	3	Chaves	1

Greek League

Olympiakos	4	Kavala	2
Xanthi	1	Panathinaikos	3
Panionios	0	AEK	1
PAOK	3	Ionikos	1
Proodeftiki	4	Heraklis	4
Pyrgos	2	OFI	0
Veria	2	Kalamata	0
Panshaiki	1	Ethnikos	0

Belgian League

Alost	1	Lokeren	5
Harelbeke	0	Lierse	2

Champions Cup

Singles final	Marcelo Rios (Chi x7) bt Greg Rusedski (GBR)	6-3, 6-7 (15/17), 7-6 (7/4), 6-4
Doubles final	Jonas Bjorkman/Pat Rafter (Swe/Aus x3) bt Martin/Richy Reneberg (USA)	6-4, 7-6 (7/3)

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA 1'	PHILADELPHIA 2'	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 2	GALLERIA 1	Hisham Yanes Theatre
	Mike Myers & Elizabeth Hurley ... in	Val Kilmer & Elizabeth Shue ... in	The biggest cinema production	Adel Imam & Yusra ... in	ABDOUN	ABDOUN	TEL: 4625155
	AUSTIN POWERS: International Man of Mystery	THE SAINT	TITANIC	RISALA ILA AL WALI (ARABIC)	GRAND OPENING	GRAND OPENING	NOW ON DAILY
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:00, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.	TITANIC SHOWS: 9:30 PM	TITANIC	TITANIC	THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE
		I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER	LONG KISS GOODNIGHT	The film is also on at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays	The film is also on at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays	The film is also on at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays	Starring Hisham Yanes and his group
		Shows: 12:30 p.m.	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30				For reservations call: 4640155, 4625155

Van Exel returns early to lift Lakers

VANCOUVER (AP) — National Basketball Association All-Star guard Nick Van Exel returned from knee surgery here Sunday and helped the Los Angeles Lakers beat Vancouver 119-110.

Van Exel had been expected to be out of action for at least three weeks after an operation on his right knee 17 days ago. He scored eight points in the fourth quarter and contributed six assists as the Lakers won their sixth game in a row.

After experiencing a popping sensation in his right knee and missing five games, Van Exel had surgery February 26. A small defect on the back-



Vancouver Grizzlies Sam Mack dives and reaches between the legs of Los Angeles Lakers Kobe Bryant to knock the ball away, during NBA action in Vancouver. Bryant scored 13 points to help the Lakers defeat the Grizzlies 119-110 (Reuters photo)

of Van Exel's kneecap was treated as the cause of the problem.

The Lakers, 9-4 in his absence, are three games behind Seattle for the best

record in the Pacific Division heading into the showdown with the Sonics on Monday.

Van Exel averaged 14.8 points and 7.7 assists in 46

games while shooting 40 per cent from three-point range.

He has the NBA's best ratio of assists to turnovers.

Vogts hands Sammer fitness deadline

BONN (AFP) — German national coach Berti Vogts said on Monday that he had given 1996 European Player of the Year Matthias Sammer until May 30 to prove his fitness otherwise he will not select him for the World Cup finals which begin in Paris on June 10.

Vogts, who said that only Olympique Marseille "keeper" Andreas Kopke was certain of making the first team, wants the Borussia Dortmund libero who spearheaded the Euro '96 triumph to make the squad but only if he has fully recovered from last October's left

knee operation, the fifth time he has undergone similar surgery.

"I will wait for as long as possible," Vogts said.

"He knows that he must play some Bundesliga matches if he is to go to France. He must be completely fit for the friendly in Helsinki on May 27 and for our final warm-up match against Colombia in Frankfurt on May 30," the 51-year-old former international defender added.

Vogts, who won the 1974 World Cup as a player and

was assistant to Franz Beckenbauer in the 1990 triumph, said he spoke to the redheaded former East German international every week and was neither pessimistic nor optimistic about his chances of making the deadline.

The 30-year-old Sammer, who became the first East German to be capped in a unified German team after winning 23 caps for the former Communist state, had said on March 4 that he felt well enough under the circumstances but still could not run.

Vogts said that he thought his side, who will face Yugoslavia, Iran and the United States in Group F, were definitely among the possible winners, though he remained convinced that Brazil were the most likely team to be crowned champions on July 12.

"Besides us and the Brazilians I can see the other title contenders being France, Italy, Spain, England, Holland and Argentina," Vogts said.

Ronaldo out to finish the job in UEFA Cup semis

PARIS (AFP) — Inter Milan expect trump card Ronaldo to ensure their passage to the UEFA Cup semi-finals on Tuesday at the expense of holders Schalke as the Italian giants seek to protect a 1-0 first-leg lead.

Overall victory would complete a revenge mission with the German outfit having edged last year's final on penalties.

Ronaldo's early goal decided the quarter-final first-leg at San Siro and Inter warmed up for the return by scoring a 4-0 home victory over struggling Atalanta.

The win kept them in the title hunt (three points behind Juventus) and would suggest that Gigi Simoni's men are in the right frame of mind to finish off Schalke in Germany.

Simoni, however, has had to reshuffle his pack. Frenchman Youri Djorkaeff is suspended, which means Chilean Ivan Zamorano, who scored against Schalke in last season's final at San Siro, will partner Ronaldo up front.

Veteran skipper Giuseppe Bergomi returns as libero with fellow defenders Nigerian Taribo West and Francesco Colonnese both dedicated to man marking

Dutchman Aron Winter, Brazilian Ze Elias and Argentine Diego Simeone will be in midfield, unless Winter fails a fitness test after a muscle injury and is replaced by Frenchman Benoit Cauet.

Schalke, who crushed Hertha Berlin 4-1 away on Friday to go fourth in the Bundesliga, will be without suspended defenders Thomas Linke and Johan De Kock as they bid to show that last season's triumph was not simply a one-off.

Friday's impressive showing came without regulars Rene Eijkelkamp, Radoslaw Latal and Thomas Linke and coach Huub Stevens said he hoped the club would use the performance as the springboard to another famous win over Inter after that of last May.

"We want to improve step by step. Up until now we have taken a lot of steps forward but the growth process isn't over yet. And you can't compare Berlin and Inter," Stevens said.

Captain Olaf Thon was more blunt, saying: "We are crass outsiders."

Schalke have to hope for an early goal despite star Dutch striker Youri Mulder's absence through

knee ligament trouble, and trust that unsettled keeper Jens Lehmann, who has conceded a miserly six goals in 12 matches this season at home, keeps Ronaldo and co. at bay.

A wave of yellow cards could yet end the hopes of Aston Villa, European champions back in 1982, as England's last survivors bid to overcome a 1-0 deficit against Atletico Madrid at Villa Park.

The hosts have no fewer than 10 players on a yellow card with a second meaning automatic suspension for the semi-final first-leg, should the team make it.

Strike trio Stan Collymore, Savo Milosevic and Dwight Yorke are among the ten threatened with yellow peril.

Collymore is ready to return after missing Villa's last three matches with groin and ankle injuries. But the seven-million-pound striker says he is ready to face the Spaniards, coached by former Luton Town star Raddy Antic.

"I've been able to train for the last couple of games with no problems and I'm hopeful of being okay for Tuesday. It's a match I really want to play in and do well in," Collymore said.

Atletico's hopes of having a say in the Spanish league title race all but disappeared Saturday when they went down 2-1 at Santiago de Compostela to leave the club in sixth place — 12 points behind leaders Barcelona.

In the other ties, Lazio, just two points off the lead in the Serie A after their superb 4-0 win at Sampdoria at the weekend, are out to make it an Italian double and join Inter in the last-four.

Lazio boss Sergio Cragnotti last week claimed his Rome-based outfit can win the league, the UEFA Cup and the Italian Cup.

But for now he'll settle for a result at French side Auxerre, whom the Italians lead 1-0 after the quarter-final first-leg in Italy.

And Spartak Moscow, chasing their first European trophy, should complete an unexpected triumph over Dutch league leaders Ajax in a frosty Russian capital having already scored an upset 3-1 win in Amsterdam.

Ajax will have to pull something special out of the hat if they are to keep alive their fading hopes of winning the UEFA Cup for the second time after 1992.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Dortmund sound out Ikpeba

BONN (AFP) — European champions Borussia Dortmund have sounded out Monaco's slick Nigerian striker Victor Ikpeba with a view to a transfer, according to Kicker magazine. Ikpeba, the 1997 African footballer of the year, is a top target for Dortmund president Gerd Niebaum, the bi-weekly revealed Monday, as the Germans rebuild after a difficult campaign marked by a string of injuries. The 24-year-old Benin-city born Ikpeba joined Monaco in 1993.

RC Liege in Belgium and made a big impression on German fans by scoring twice in the Champions League this season at Bayer Leverkusen.

Lee resigns as Man. City chief

MANCHESTER (AFP) — Francis Lee on Monday bowed to months of mounting pressure and resigned as chairman of first division strugglers Manchester City. City announced Lee's departure at a press conference this afternoon and director David Bernstein will succeed him. In a statement Lee claimed his family, personal and business life had been severely disrupted in recent weeks. Lee has also stood down as a director at the fallen giants of English football, who are currently threatened by relegation to the second division.

Lopez in cheekbone operation

TOKYO (AFP) — Brazilian-born forward Wagner Lopez, a candidate for Japan's World Cup finals squad, underwent surgery on Monday on a broken left cheekbone. The 29-year-old Bellmare Hiratsuka striker will be out of action for a month, the J-League club said in a statement. Lopez, who took Japanese nationality last September, will miss Saturday's J-League season-opener at home to Verdy Kawasaki. He was injured when he collided with an opponent in a practice match with a college team on Saturday.

Ticketless World Cup fans urged to stay at home

LONDON (AFP) — Sports Minister Tony Banks on Monday urged British football fans not to travel to France for this summer's World Cup finals unless they had tickets — because "the French police don't muck around."

Banks made his warning during a debate in Parliament on the controversial issue of ticket allocations for the event.

The English and Scottish Football Associations have complained about what they regard as a meagre allocation of tickets for the finals with just six percent per match going to the supporters of each team.

Several MPs pressed Banks on their concerns that ticketless fans might cause trouble in France.

Banks replied the Government had spoken to the French authorities about the problem of hooliganism but stressed that, as long as British fans behaved themselves, there would be no difficulties.

He added: "We will always seek to protect our supporters travelling abroad because they don't leave their civil

rights in this country when they go, but they must behave and they must remember that they are ambassadors for this country."

"Of course the French police don't muck around and they have got very, very strict rules with regards to ticket touting as well."

"So don't think they are a push-over, because they're not, and don't risk it, if you haven't got a ticket, don't travel."

Barcelona close to title

MADRID (AFP) — A goal from captain Luis Figo in the dying seconds clinched Barcelona a 2-1 victory at Valladolid on Sunday and moved them another step closer to the league title.

With a game in hand, Barcelona now have 58 points from 28 matches — seven points more than second-placed rivals Real Madrid who were held 2-2 at home by Santander Saturday.

Barcelona did not have things all their own way, however, and after Jose-Manuel Chema had put Valladolid clear in the 18th minute the visitors had to wait until midway through the second-half for Rivaldo to equalise with a superbly worked free-kick.

Giovanni nearly clinched it for Barcelona with a late header — but his effort hit the bar. It was left to Figo, the Portuguese international midfielder, to score the injury-time winner.

In Sunday's other matches Real Sociedad came away 3-0 winners from Espanyol and Valencia were 2-0 winners at Zaragoza. Betis saw off visiting Salamanca 2-1, Merida beat Deportivo La Coruna 1-0 and Oviedo were 2-1 winners over Sporting Gijon. But Celta Vigo and Tenerife finished 0-0.

Newcastle call emergency meeting

NEWCASTLE (AFP) — Premiership giants Newcastle United called an emergency board meeting Monday in the wake of weekend allegations against the chairman and one of the most senior directors.

Shares in the club slumped when the stock market opened following tabloid accusations against club boss Freddy Shepherd, 56, and Douglas Hall, 39.

Over nine million pounds (\$15 million) was wiped off the company's stock market value, taking it to just under £120 million.

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WEST

Q1052

QJ73

QJ107

442

SOUTH

AS

AK10804

AS

AQ83

The bidding:

<p>SOUTH</p> <p>10 Pass</p> <p>20 Pass</p> <p>40 Pass</p> <p>50 Pass</p>	<p>WEST</p> <p>1s</p> <p>2s</p> <p>3s</p> <p>4s</p>	<p>NORTH</p> <p>1s</p> <p>2s</p> <p>3s</p> <p>4s</p>	<p>EAST</p> <p>1s</p> <p>2s</p> <p>3s</p> <p>4s</p>
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Opening lead: Queen of 6

Cover up the East and West hands with your thumbs, then decide: Is six clubs a good alarm? How would you play the hand?

If you are going to essay a slam, six clubs certainly offers the best chance. The bidding shows is one way of getting there. South's sequence promises a better than minimum opening bid with six

hearts and four clubs, and North can't be blamed for suggesting the 4-5 fit, since hearts can be ruffed in the short-trump hand.

Making 12 tricks depends on being able to cash dummy's top spades for a diamond discard from hand and having either hearts or clubs divided 3-3, while the other breaks no worse than 4-2. All those favorable splits make slam an iffy proposition at best, but it does simplify the play.

Win the opening lead with the ace of diamonds and play off the ace and king of spades, discarding the losing diamond from hand. Next, cash the ace of hearts and ruff a heart in dummy. Good news: East-West follow to both rounds. You are now ready to test how the suits divide.

Cash the king of clubs, overtake the jack of clubs with the queen and cash the ace. If both defenders follow, you can surrender a heart trick if necessary and claim the rest of the tricks. A trump is the entry back to your hand.

When West discards on the third trump, you must hope for an even division in hearts. Abandon trumps and revert to that suit, making the king. When both defenders follow, continue running the suit until East ruffs. The trump trick is all you lose.

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Israel blocks trip by bedouin Arabs to Iraq

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel has barred a delegation of bedouin Arabs from visiting Iraq on grounds that such a trip would be seen as an official gesture towards Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's regime, an official said Monday.

The delegation representing bedouins living in Israel's southern Negev desert received visas to visit Iraq through the Iraqi embassy in Amman, Jordan.

But the Israeli government refused to grant permission for the trip, an official said.

"We wanted to take a message of peace to President Saddam Hussein," a member of the group, Ibrahim Al Hamuri, said on Israeli army radio.

"This would be in the interests of the Israeli and Iraqi people," he said. "We mustn't consider Iraq as the enemy of Israel."

Motti Zaken, the Arab affairs advisor to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said the government could not approve the bedouins' trip to Iraq, considered a state hostile to Israel.

"If we granted permis-

sion, the gesture would be interpreted as an official decision to send an Israeli delegation to Iraq," Mr. Zaken said.

Israeli law prohibits citizens from visiting "hostile" states like Syria or Iraq without prior government approval.

Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles at Israel during the 1991 Gulf war, killing two people and wounding hundreds.

About 140,000 bedouins live in Israel, mostly in the Negev desert and the northern Galilee region.

Israel, Austria differ over Arafat's title of president

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A dispute between Israel and Austria over Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's official title has cast a shadow over a visit here this week by Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima, an Austrian official said Monday.

Israel has objected to Mr. Klima's insistence that Mr. Arafat be referred to as president of the Palestinian National Authority, a post to which he was elected by Palestinian voters in January 1996, said Hulf

Hausbramt, spokesman at the Austrian embassy in Tel Aviv.

The government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants Mr. Arafat referred to only as chairman of the authority, judging that the title president implies sovereign powers for the self-rule administration.

As a result of the tiff, Israel and Austria will not issue a joint communiqué following Mr. Klima's talks with Israeli leaders on Thursday, Mr. Hausbramt

told AFP.

"Our practice is to refer to Arafat as president and because of our difference with Israel on this we will issue separate communiqués following the meeting between Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Klima," he said.

Mr. Klima is due to arrive in Israel late Wednesday and will meet with Mr. Netanyahu and other Israeli officials on Thursday. He will meet President Arafat in Gaza City on Friday, the embassy said.

Annan says threat of force made diplomatic victory possible

GENEVA (AFP) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said Monday that the threat to use force against Iraq made possible a diplomatic victory in the arms inspection crisis.

Mr. Annan, in Geneva to open the 54th session of the Human Rights Commission Monday, was cheered by a group of U.N. staff on his arrival at the Palais des Nations.

The secretary general received a hero's welcome on his return to New York last month from Baghdad, where

he negotiated an agreement to allow U.N. inspectors free access to eight suspect "presidential" sites.

That pact averted a U.S. military strike against Baghdad.

"At the end of the day, diplomacy won," Mr. Annan said. "But of course as I said, it was also backed up by firmness and a military presence."

"But the best way in my judgement as an old peace-

mission to the Iraqi capital in February and the accord that won U.N. Security Council approval, Mr. Annan said.

"Last month we had the chance to do something that was significant for the world and for the United Nations," The U.N. chief appointed Sri Lankan diplomat Jagantha Dhanapala as head of a special group tasked with inspecting Iraqi presidential sites.

He also named Prakash Shah from India to be his special representative in Iraq.

Russia invites Iran's nuclear power chief to Moscow

MOSCOW (AFP) — Iran's top atomic energy official has been invited to Moscow in May to discuss progress on a controversial nuclear power plant which Russia is building on Iran's Gulf coast, ITAR-TASS reported Monday.

Russian Nuclear Power Minister Yevgeny Adamov invited Iranian Organisation for Atomic Energy president, Gholam Agazadeh, to Moscow to discuss the \$800 million Bushehr power plant.

The United States has pressured Russia to drop the nuclear project, fearing it may result in the transfer of sensitive nuclear and ballistic technology to Tehran.

But Moscow stressed again Monday that it would press on with the deal.

"We will never refuse this contract because it is very beneficial for us," Mr. Adamov's

spokesman Georgy Kaurov was cited by ITAR-TASS as saying.

Earlier this month, Ukraine pulled out of its role in the power plant under U.S. pressure, but Russia has insisted that Kiev's move will not jeopardise the project.

The Bushehr plant, currently envisaged to be fitted with one light water VVER reactor, is due to be completed in the middle of 1999. But Moscow and Tehran are reportedly discussing a deal to install two more reactors at Bushehr.

In a second nuclear cooperation deal, Moscow is due to sign an accord with New Delhi next month on the construction of a nuclear power plant in India, ITAR-TASS reported.

The agency said Mr. Adamov met with Indian Ambassador in Moscow

Ranendra Sen to discuss financial details of the plant construction, and will travel to India in the near future to discuss the "strategic guidelines" of nuclear cooperation.

"The development of nuclear power engineering in India may be an example to other Asian nations," Mr. Adamov told Mr. Sen according to ITAR-TASS.

Russia is lined up to build an atomic power plant with two light-water reactors in India, though it has taken the two sides almost 10 years to work out how India will pay for the work.

Russia has insisted that its cooperation with other countries in civil nuclear power plants will not lead to the transfer of technology and is not in contravention of arms proliferation treaties.

Bosnians make debut at UAE arms show

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Bosnia Hercegovina has brought its modest arms industry to an international show in the Middle East, seeking clients in a region that was a staunch backer during the war against the Serbs.

The UAE army chief, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahayan, financed the Bosnian stand at the five-day specialised military exhibition in Abu Dhabi that ends on Thursday.

"The army chief of staff paid for this stand to encourage us to participate," said Enver Pasalic of Unis Promex, a government venture supervising Bosnia's participation in the TRIDEX show.

"It is the first time we exhibit our defence industry in this region," he told AFP.

Dwarfed by such major participants as the United States, Britain and France, the Bosnian stand is made up of ammunition, detonation systems, optical electronics, night vision systems, rockets and helmets.

Although their military sector was badly hit in the Bosnian war, Bosnian firms are now exporting arms to Europe and hope that TRIDEX will mark their entry into the lucrative Gulf Arab weapons market.

"We are rebuilding our arms industry after most of our factories were destroyed in the

war," Mr. Pasalic said.

"We are now exporting some types of weapons to Europe and other countries ... We hope to sell in this area in the near future as there has been a strong interest in our products here."

Gulf states were among the main aid donors to Bosnia during the 1992-1996 war. They also provided it with arms and military training and are still extending financial assistance for post-war reconstruction.

The oil-producing countries have emerged as the biggest spenders on arms over the past few years, allocating more than 30 per cent of their total expenditure to the sector.



A Jordanian child smiles as he is tightly embraced by his mother who looks out over the city of Amman as it is smothered in a sandstorm on Monday. The desert sandstorm covered the Kingdom for most of the morning (Reuters photo) (see separate story on page 1)

Vatican issues 'Holocaust document'

Israelis argue historic document fell short of expectations

TEL AVIV (R) — Israelis voiced disappointment at a Vatican document on Monday they said failed to account for the role of Catholic teachings in spawning the Nazi Holocaust during World War II.

Holocaust scholars were generally disappointed with the 14-page statement which denied the genocide as an "unspeakable tragedy" but absolved wartime Pope Pius XII of accusations he turned a blind eye to it.

"The statement is far less than what was hoped for," said Efraim Zuroff, director of the Israel office of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre that researches Nazi crimes. Historians say the Nazis systematically exterminated six million Jews.

"I think that while acknowledging the enormity of the tragedy is important, there is a need for an unequivocal

acknowledging of the role played by the church's teaching in anti-Semitism that paved the way for the crimes of the Holocaust," he told Reuters.

Cardinal Edward Cassidy, head of the Vatican commission for religious relations with Jews, said at a Vatican news conference that the 14-page document was an apology and an act of repentance for members of the church who failed to save Jews.

In a brief introduction to the document, Pope John Paul said the Holocaust would forever remain an "indelible stain" on the 20th century and urged Christians to "examine themselves for the responsibility which they too have for the evils of our time."

The Pope did not mention Pius XII in his introduction but the document clearly defended him against accusations by some Jews that he did not do everything in his power to help

them.

"I found it [the report] to be first of all an attempt to safeguard the memory of Pope Pius XII who throughout World War II never condemned the Nazi persecution of Jews," said Yitzhak Minerbil, who researches Israel's relations with the Vatican.

He said the statement found fault in the behaviour of individual church members but not in the institution itself.

"Yes, there were blunders by some of the church's sons and daughters... but the church and its institutions are cleared of any wrongdoing," he told Israel Radio.

Rabbi David Rosen, who helped negotiate diplomatic ties between Israel and the Vatican in 1994, said it was unrealistic to expect the document to criticise Pius.

"For those who might have expected that this document

was going to deal with the role of Pope Pius XII or talk about the complicity of the church as the church, then they were going to be disappointed from the outset," Rabbi Rosen, director of the Anti-Defamation League's Israel office, told Reuters.

He called the Vatican statement an important document but said it failed to "identify the direct link between the church's historic teaching of contempt towards Jews and the cultural climate that facilitated the shoah [holocaust]."

Parliament member Shevach Weiss, a Holocaust survivor who watched relatives die in Europe, said the apology came too late.

"The fact is that this terrible, dark, satanic, anti-humanistic and cruel phenomenon was a European phenomenon among the Christians, Catholics and other groups in the Catholic Church," he said.

Many trapped in college building collapse in India

CHANDIGARH, India (AFP) — An unspecified number of construction workers were trapped when a portion of a building collapsed Monday in this northern Indian city, officials said.

City administrator Anuradha Gupta said some 70 workers were buried in the rubble when a conference hall under construction for a state-owned medical college collapsed.

"It is difficult to say how many people are dead as of now," Ms. Gupta told a domestic news agency.

A journalist from the site of the collapse said 31 people have so far been rescued and taken to hospitals, that three of them were in critical condition.

Ms. Gupta said the workers were preparing the roof of the hall when it gave way around 6:45 p.m. local time.

Turk-Cypriots will not join delegation to EU — Denktash

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash Monday rejected an official offer from the government of Cyprus to include Turkish-Cypriots in the island's delegation to discuss membership with the European Union (EU).

"This invitation to participate in the Cypriot delegation is an attempt to obtain an indirect recognition by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) of the Greek-Cypriot republic of Cyprus's government," Mr. Denktash was quoted as saying by the Turkish-Cypriot news agency TAK.

He added that he had "immediately rejected" the offer.

The Cypriot government sent the offer earlier Monday through British High Commissioner for Cyprus David Madden, who met with Mr. Denktash.

The TRNC was set up by the Turkish-Cypriots in 1983, but it is recognised only by Ankara.

The internationally recognised Greek-Cypriot government is due to start accession talks with the EU March 30.

"The so-called Cypriot delegation is a purely and simply a Greek-Cypriot delegation and will hold negotiations in the name of the Greek-Cypriot government," TAK quoted Mr. Denktash as saying.

"There is no question of Turkish-Cypriot representatives joining this delegation... if the EU wants Cyprus as a member, it should know that Cyprus's application only represents the Greek-Cypriot republic in the south," he said.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said last week that the EU membership negotiations with Cyprus later this month will proceed regardless

of whether representatives of the Turkish-Cypriot community agree to join the divided Mediterranean island's negotiating team.

The Turkish-Cypriot leader said Monday the TRNC would unite with Turkey if the EU grants membership to Cyprus.

Turkey and Mr. Denktash are staunchly opposed to Cyprus's admission into the EU before a political solution is reached to end the island's 24-year division or before Ankara itself joins the bloc.

Cyprus has been divided since Turkish troops occupied the north in 1974 in response to a coup in Nicosia aimed at uniting the island with Greece.

U.S. starts troop anthrax vaccinations in Kuwait

KUWAIT (R) — The United States this week started vaccinating some 6,000 American troops in Kuwait against the deadly biological agent anthrax, which Iraq is suspected of possessing, a U.S. military spokesman said on Monday.

"The prudent force protection plan started on Sunday," the spokesman told Reuters. "Some 6,000 American troops in Kuwait will receive the mandatory anthrax vaccinations."

The vaccination of U.S. troops deployed at Camp Doha, air bases and desert locations near Kuwait's border with Iraq is expected to take a week to complete.

Earlier in March, Washington said that some

36,000 American troops in the Gulf region would be vaccinated. It decided to begin the mass inoculations at the request of Marine Corps General Anthony Zinni, commander of U.S. forces in the Gulf.

Britain began vaccinating its 3,500 troops in the Gulf earlier in March, but is making the shots voluntary, British officials said.

Canadian Sergeant Mike Kipling was shipped out of Kuwait on Sunday and will face disciplinary action for refusing an order to be vaccinated for anthrax.

Canadian health officials gave the military special permission to use the vaccine because of fears anthrax could be used against Canada's soldiers by Iraq.

Doctors began giving the vaccine to about 400 Canadians in the region last week. They began with the 230-member crew of the frigate HMCS Toronto, and continued with the 120 Canadian assigned to the aerial refuelling operation based in Kuwait.

The vaccination of U.S. troops in Kuwait and the Gulf was originally planned for later this year but was brought forward because of the latest standoff between Iraq and the United Nations over arms inspections, officers said.

Defence sources said Western powers discussed the issue for several weeks, but gave the go-ahead after Iraq and the United Nations reached an arms inspections accord in late February.

Anthrax, usually an animal disease, can infect humans and has a high fatality rate.

The U.S. says Iraq has developed anthrax cattle disease into a biological weapon that could be used in artillery shells or sprayed from aircraft.

Vaccinations for American troops were flown to Kuwait in recent days.

Immunisation requires six shots over 18 months followed by annual booster shots.

China develops pocket contraceptive for men

BEIJING (R) — It is the size of a pager, fits in a man's underwear and emits electronic pulses — and it is a new male contraceptive developed in China. The device emits sperm-killing pulses that can render a man sterile for up to a month. "The gadget can be placed in the user's underwear, where it transmits pulses into the body to autonomic nerves which change the sperm's habitat," Xinhua news agency reported. Turning the device on the target area for one hour is enough to cause sterility for one month, while full fertility would return two months after ceasing to use the contraception.

Gullible thief ensnared by stolen pager

LONDON (R) — A British man trapped the thief who stole his pager by leaving a message saying he had won £500. Builder Justin Clark was fined £150 for being in possession of stolen property after answering David Withers' message. Withers said: "I was fuming when I found my car had been broken into. I called police and then decided to leave the message. Not long afterwards, my mobile rang and a shady sounding voice asked about the prize. I told him he had won £500 in a church fete. The police arrested the idiot when he came to collect the prize."

Empress' handkerchief fetches \$10,000

VIENNA (R) — A silk handkerchief once owned by Austria's legendary Empress Elisabeth has fetched nearly \$10,000 in a Vienna auction. The handkerchief, a present from Elisabeth's mother when she married Habsburg cousin Emperor Franz Josef I in 1853, was sold for \$9,410 on Saturday, the Dorotheum auction house said. The moment of the beautiful teenager known affectionately as Sissi was purchased by an anonymous telephone bidder from Germany, it said. Franz Josef's linen handkerchief was sold to a collector for a more modest \$1,110.

Winslet's new love moves in

LONDON (AFP) — Now that Kate Winslet's new love is no longer the big secret he once seemed, he's taken the next step and moved in with the heroine of "Titanic." Winslet has been seeing James Threlton since August, but had planned to reveal their relationship only by bringing him to next Monday's Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles. The press found out, though, so there was little point hanging around. Threlton, 24, moved in to her north London home over the weekend. The couple even posed for photographs. Winslet said: "It was an instant attraction. He makes me laugh my head off."

Camilla Parker Bowles steps back into spotlight

LONDON (AFP) — Prince Charles's love affair with Camilla Parker Bowles is back firmly in the spotlight after they held a joint reception at the queen's Sandringham estate. Six months after the death of his former wife Princess Diana, the move is being seen as another bid by Charles to have their relationship accepted by the public. Camilla was widely perceived as the third party in the break-up of Charles' marriage to Diana. It was the first time the couple, who have known each other for 25 years, had held such an event at Sandringham, the Sun reported.

King arrives in Washington

WASHINGTON (R) — President Clinton on Tuesday welcomed King to the White House and issued a statement saying the peace process in the Middle East will also meet with his support. Clinton and other officials will meet with King on Tuesday to discuss the peace process. Clinton said King's visit was a "historic moment" and that the United States will continue to support the peace process. King said he was pleased to be in the United States and to meet with President Clinton. He said he was looking forward to meeting with Clinton on Tuesday to discuss the peace process. King said he was pleased to be in the United States and to meet with President Clinton. He said he was looking forward to meeting with Clinton on Tuesday to discuss the peace process.

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